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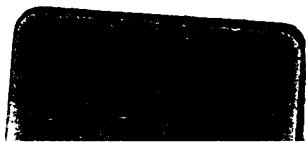
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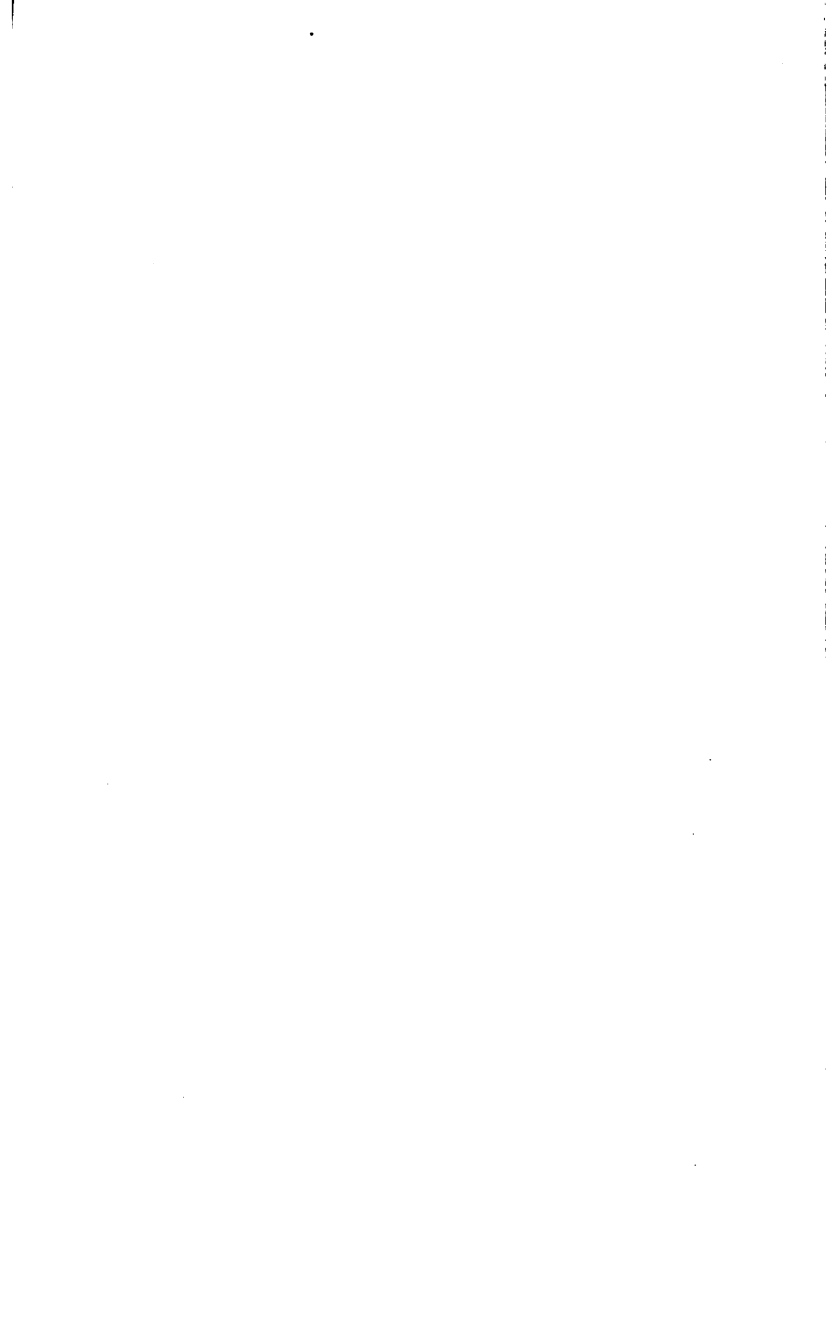
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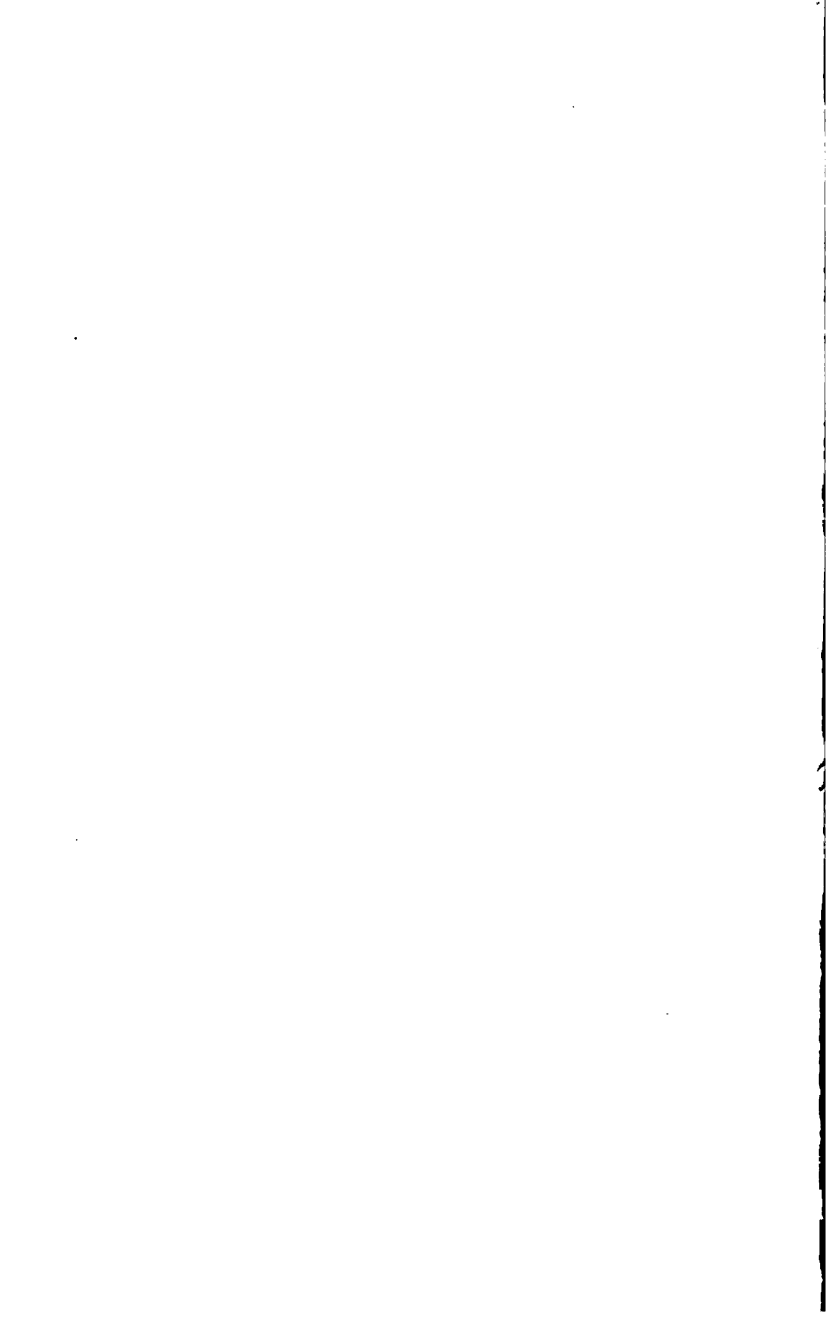


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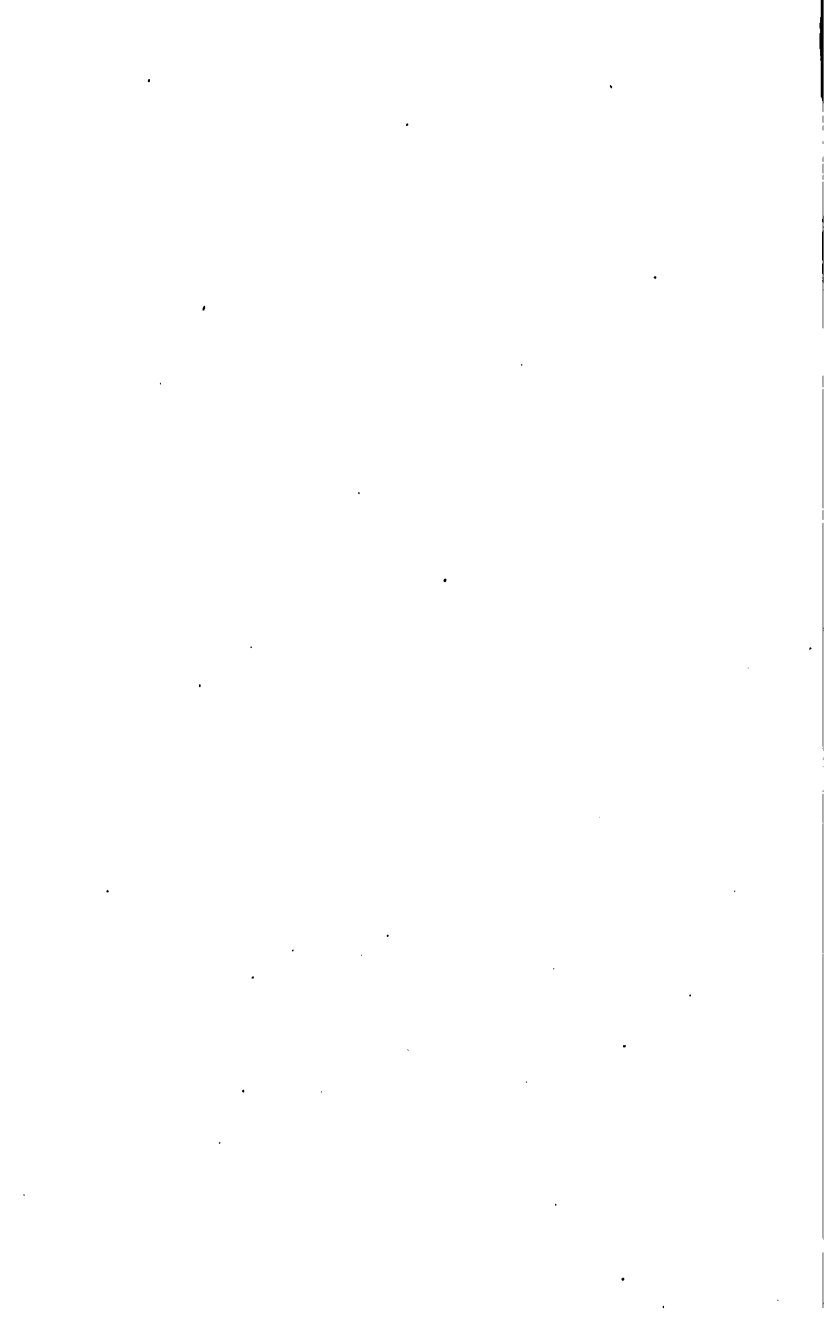


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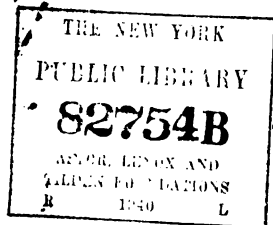
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To

JOHN HAMLYN LIGHTWAIT,

WHO,

NOTWITHSTANDING HIS ADHERENCE TO A THEOLOGY OLDER AND STERNER
THAN THAT HEREIN ATTRIBUTED TO HIM,

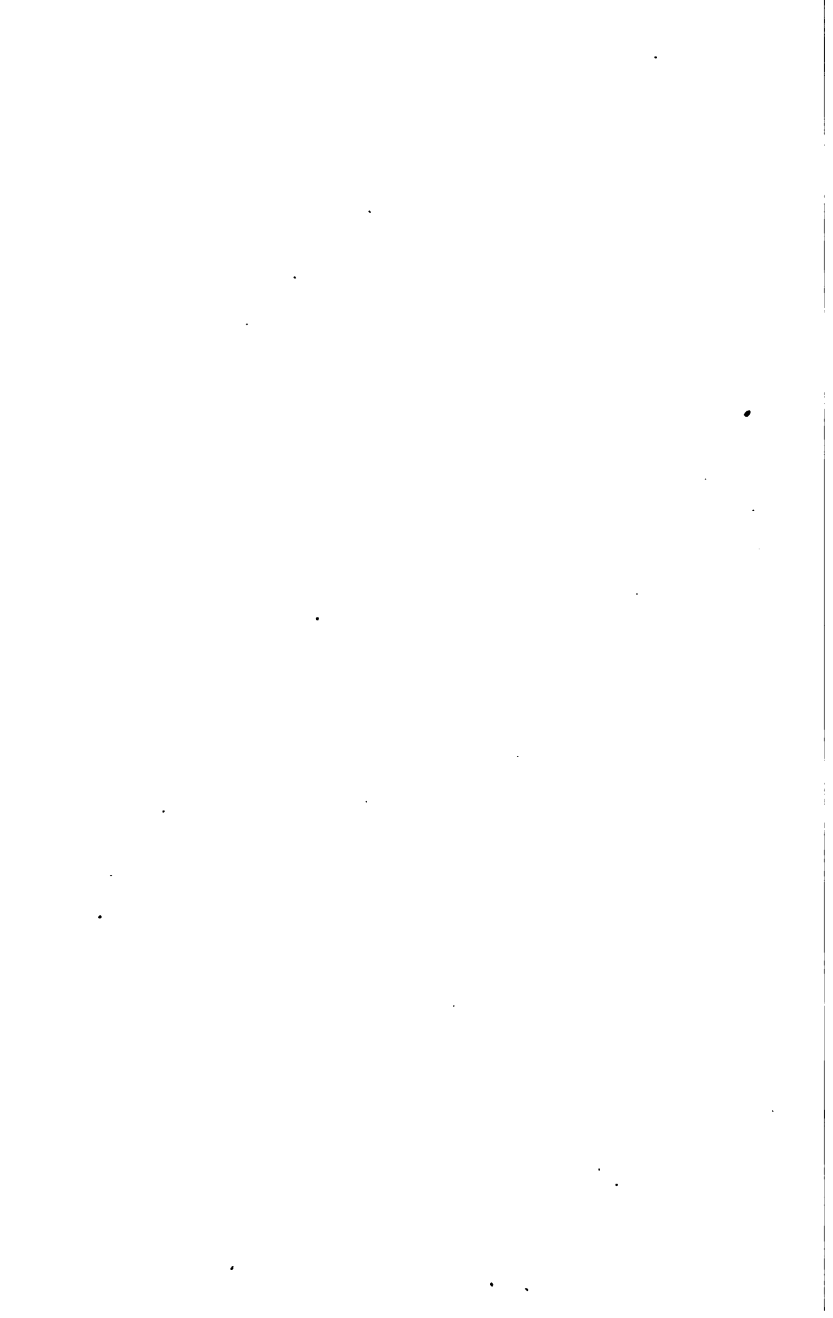
WILL PROBABLY RECOGNISE HIMSELF IN THE CHARACTER OF

THE BISHOP'S SON,

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

By the Author.

HOPING HIS AVAIL, WITH THAT POOR HOPE WHICH LACKETH CONFIDENCE.



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THE BISHOP'S SON.

CHAPTER I.

WAS IT REALLY LOVE?



HE sunshine was hot between the April showers, and the rude, rickety door-stones (they could hardly be called door-steps) of the old farmhouse to which, they led, were wet and dry almost at the same moment, happening at the moment in which our story opens, to be dry; the fickle clouds had scattered, and the sun was shining with pretty nearly midsummer heat. It was about noon-day, and the young girl who had been busy all the morning digging in the flower-beds that lay on either side a straight path running from the front door to the front gate, suddenly tossed aside her bonnet, and flung herself down on the steps. She was tired, and rather lay than sat; and a pleasant picture she made, her flushed cheek on her arm, the cape, lately tied at her throat, drawn carelessly to her lap, her tiny naked feet sunken in the grass, and all her fair neck and dimpled shoulders bare.

Close to the wall on either side the steps grew a pair of twin rose-bushes, and these were partly lying down, too, so that but a narrow entrance was left between them, wide enough, however, for only a few grand visitors presumed to seek admission at the front door. A young peach-tree spread out its thrifty branches over bushes, steps, and all, and in its grateful shadow the rustic girl rested, quiet as the shade; and as she thus rested, her heart full of sweet dreams and fancies, no doubt, the head of a snake, flat, and colored like old rusty copper, pushed itself up through a crack in the stones, almost beneath her hand, and slowly,

ring after ring, drew itself out. A moment, and the head, swollen from its first flatness, was high in the air, and the slender and bluish throat curving itself lower and lower, nearer and nearer to the fair, smooth shoulder beneath.

Is it true that nature has instincts for all the crises of life? Perhaps so. At any rate, it was thus imported in this instance. The helpless girl seemed rather to know, than to perceive, her danger; she did not move a muscle, not when the clammy head touched her shoulder, nor yet, when feeling its sly way along, it stopped at her throat, and lay with all its black length wriggling and throbbing against her side, but with thought and breath suspended, and consciousness narrowed to one awful chance, waited, hardly knowing that she waited, hardly knowing anything. She remembered afterward that a mountain's weight seemed to be upon her, and that she had been restrained from motion by some power quite independent of herself. She did not hear the lifting of the gate-latch, nor the footstep that came up the path: she heard nothing, saw nothing, felt nothing, till the mountain's weight was gone, and, standing up, she saw the snake, without its head, writhing and twisting to stiff, knotty rings, in the bloody grass at her feet.

She saw this, and knew that she was saved, and then a blind dizziness came upon her, and she fell to the ground, quite swooned away.

When she came to herself, a young man, whom till then she had never seen, was kneeling at her side and fanning her with his hat, a broad-brimmed palm-leaf. She had never seen him, and yet she gave him her hand confidently; the heart had recognized him.

And here we may as well say a word or two of these young persons. The girl lived with her widowed mother in the old, but somewhat pretentious farm-house, on the door-steps of which we have introduced her. She was at that charming period when the look of the woman is borne up from the heart of the child, like the lily from the wave, and, in her way, she was beautiful; but, being born of a race of rustics, she, of course, knew more of hard work than of the schoolmaster, and was quite lacking in the intellectual culture which gives to beauty its highest and most enchanting expression. Her name was Margaret Fairfax.

The young man was almost a stranger in the neighbor-

hood, having within a few days past, hired to the mistress of a sheep and dairy farm, a Mrs. Whiteflock, whose hilly grounds adjoined those of Mrs. Fairfax. She had a husband whom she managed, together with her other property, but of him, hereafter. The name of the stranger was Samuel Dale. He had been commissioned that morning to return home a crowbar, which Mrs. Whiteflock had borrowed of her neighbor, and as he came up the door-yard path, with the bar on his shoulder, felt suddenly the blood stand still and freeze in his veins. He comprehended at a glance the whole situation, and was master of it. Sliding the iron bar from his shoulder to the ground, and slipping his feet from out their stiff shoes, he came with the stealth of a leopard, and seizing the reptile by the tail, gave it one wild whirl, ending with a jerk so violent and sharp, as to snap off the head, and send it half across the door-yard.

To one who saw only the outward man, this stranger would not, perhaps, have been especially prepossessing; he possessed neither gracefulness of motion, nor handsomeness of proportion, nor yet that brilliancy of intelligence which speaks for a man while he is silent, and bespeaks his manhood. He was large of person, and ungainly of limb, a laborer born to labor, and as yet, contented with his lot. The conventional proprieties of life seemed to him but impediments and hindrances; he would have nothing of them; the flail and the scythe were pleasanter to his hand than a glove or a book; in short, he was altogether in the rough, but he had a large soul, a sweet and sound heart, and was honest through and through.

'Don't be afeared! it's all over now!' he said to Margaret, as she opened her eyes and looked at him, but it was bashfulness, and not terror, that intimidated her; an angel could not have seemed fairer than he, to her, just then, and she replied to his encouragement with a smile and a blush.

He lifted her in his strong arms, carefully and tenderly as though she had been a baby, and placed her on the grassy border of the path in which she had fallen, and having done this, drew away and stood gazing upon her with such reverence, apparently, as the devout worshipper feels in the presence of the Virgin.

He was quite unconscious of the reptile lying at his feet, till Margaret, seeing that its slim tail was still quivering and

beating the ground, motioned him away. His face flushed scarlet, and his voice trembled with outraged feeling as he said, twisting his beard on his fingers — “Cuss the devilish thing! think of it—in such a place, too.” Margaret dropped her eyes, and hastily adjusted her cape. She was not sorry he had cursed the snake, but she wished he had not said *cuss*.

He had his heel on the creature now, and was admonishing it on this wise: “You infernal blue-bellied son of perdition, I reckon you won’t frighten the like o’ her again!” nodding toward Margaret. “No! not while Sam Dale can handle a crowbar. I only wish you had twenty lives so that I might whisk ’em all out of you!” Then, addressing Margaret: “Don’t you s’pose his nasty black wife is keepin’ house there under the door-stone? Maybe there is a young brood comin’ on, too!” And seizing the iron bar, he set to work, prying the stones away.

The mate was discovered directly, sure enough, with three young copperheads in her embrace. “Don’t be afeared, my Daisy, don’t be afeared!” he kept entreating, with eyes fixed upon Margaret, the while he crushed one of the vile things after the other, and tossed it from the end of his bar, over the fence, into the highway.

“I am not afraid, not with you near me,” Margaret answered ingenuously. There was no trembling, no terror now, and even the first bashfulness was beginning to give way. It seemed to her that her new friend might not only stand between her and the present danger, but also between her and all the dangers in the world. She had never in her life experienced such a sense of quiet security and protection, not even with her mother. She reposed in his presence as in a comfortable shadow, and would have had the time stand still while she listened; for this stranger seemed strangely near and dear to her, the very sweetest of her friends.

He talked continually, and mostly about the little affairs of his daily life and observation, using strange words and bad grammar, but she did not tire of his talk. Somehow, she knew not how, it fed her, and she was satisfied. She knew directly all about his brave, old grandfather who fought in the Revolution; all about his mother, and her curious way of dreaming out truth; all about his sturdy brother

Ned, who was a blacksmith, and all about handsome Phil, who was lost at sea. Of himself, she knew almost the entire history. He had been born in poverty, and was poor yet, but willing to work, and confident of achieving success. Mrs. Whiteflock was paying him high wages, he said, twenty dollars a month, and that would soon make a fine start for a young fellow.

It was like play to work for Mrs. Whiteflock. She was so good-natured and kind-hearted, and next to attending her, he was fond of attending her sheep. "I like to set among 'em," he said, "and think about things."

"About your work, I suppose," answered Margaret, archly.

"Sometimes," he replied, with almost sad sincerity, "and sometimes about the time when I shall have a flock of my own and a house like the parson's, yonder, may be, with a daisy at the winder, bloomin' all for me. I like to think them things, and" (he glanced at Margaret) "I've always got the picter of some little daisy in my heart."

His eyes, so large, so full of gentle innocence and truth, reminded her of the eyes of an ox, and she could have stroked his beard and put her arm around his neck, just as she had done many a time with some favorite of the field. She had felt his remark to be almost, if not quite, personal, and yet she had not blushed, nor picked at her apron, nor looked down; on the contrary, she had looked straight in his face, and returned his smile. "You mustn't tell anybody," she said, "that you always have one picture or another in your heart, because we girls are selfish, and when we give our pictures, like to think that no other will ever have the same place."

"Mustn't I? then I'm sorry that I told you. I'm always wrong when I want most to be right."

"Of course not; who would like to suppose she was going to be put aside for the first pretty face you happened to meet? I wouldn't, I'm sure!"

"Some faces couldn't be put aside very easy for a prettier one, but I reckon the more I say about such things, the more blunders I'll make." He added the closing words, perhaps, in deference to the grave, not to say frowning brow of Margaret, and after a moment, went on apologetically: "I've

got to say just what I think, if I say anything; women don't, I reckon; they are all artful like, aint they?"

Margaret shook her head, but smiled, at once admitting and denying the accusation.

"So I've done wrong," he resumed, speaking as if to himself. "Well, I might'er knowed I would, for I've foreseen one thing ever since I come to be a man; I've foreseen that I should never set to work the right way to gather my daisy, not even when I had it within reach o' my hand."

"What makes you think so? The daisies must wait, you know, and who comes first gets the fairest; they all grow to be gathered, I suppose."

"Yes, but I shall tread on mine, in my eager awkwardness, or lose it somehow, it's all been foreshadowed!"

Margaret smiled.

"You laugh; but I have knowed it a good many year; in the main, I can see how it will all be; ever since I have stood here, I have seen it as plain as you see the shader of that peach tree: and speakin' of shaders, I see by their slant that the noon spell is over; I must go." And he began to draw on his coat which he had thrown aside for his battle with the snakes, humming to himself the while, the fragment of a spiritual song, beginning thus:—

"The day is a-wasting, wasting, wasting,
The day is a-wasting — night is near;
Lord, in the twillight, Lord, in the deep night,
Lord, in the midnight, be thou near."

Margaret was shocked; he was singing this sanctified hymn to the tune of High Betty Martin!"

"Did you know," she said, "that was a church hymn?"

Yes, the young man had sung it a thousand times at quarterly and camp meetings, and he thought it was "mighty purty."

"But you didn't sing it to that wicked dancing tune!"

"Why," he said, looking tenderly upon her, "hasn't some o' them pious old men, Wesley, or some o' em, said the devil oughtn't to have all the good tunes?"

"I don't know what anybody has said," Margaret answered, "but don't you ever again sing that good hymn to that bad tune; tell me you won't."

"Not for the world, if it offends you!" and his manner

as he said this had all the grace of a courtier, because it had all the simple sweetness and grace of nature.

"Not for the reason that it offends me," Margaret replied, "but for the reason that it offends Heaven." She went close to him as she spoke, and laid her hand lightly on his arm; big, strong, sturdy as he was, he was trembling.

"I promise," he said, bending low to her upturned face, (he did not touch even a hair of her head), and speaking almost in a whisper — "I promise, promise sacredly."

Margaret did not dig any more in the flower-beds that day. She had new matter for thought in her little heart.

It was market-day, and her mother was gone to town with eggs and butter and other things which they were used to sell once in the week, bringing home in their stead such articles of household and personal comfort and adornment as need or fancy suggested. Margaret expected nothing for herself on this special day, indeed she had always the lesser share, but no expectation could have augmented the interest with which she awaited her mother's return. She had such great news to tell! So much to say about Samuel Dale! If her mother could only see him! if she could only hear him sing "The day is a-wasting" to a real camp-meeting tune! Perhaps this delightful consummation might yet come about. When or how, she did not inquire, for all her mind was in a sweet confusion of enthusiasm, dreamy, vague, enchanting.

A benediction seemed to have fallen upon the old house, and everything about it, and she looked upon it all with new and placid satisfaction. She made haste to put the chimney-corner, the dresser, the work-table and the tea-table in order, against the return of her mother, she said to her heart, but it answered, I am stirred with a new inspiration, I am come up from childhood to womanhood, I am in a new world, and that is why your hand is so cheerfully busy. When she came to her own little chamber, the chamber she had neglected and almost despised for its humbleness, she sat on the low bed a long time, musing softly.

From the east window she could see Mrs. Whiteflock's fields, and she held the view an attraction now, the hills covered with sheep, the dark woods beyond, the square brick house with its many windows and porches, the gray weather-beaten barn, the stone smoke-house, prison-like and dark — everything was pleasing, nay, more, beautiful.

By and by she arose and fell to searching old drawers, and climbing to unaccustomed shelves, a little love ditty singing itself as she did so. She was intent on the adornment of her chamber. Her mother's wedding petticoat, bestowed upon her in her doll-baby days, would make curtains for the small windows, and here was some silk stuff for pin cushions; here some books of pictures that would garnish the table, there a white counterpane, so much nicer than the patch-work quilt, and at last, O, treasure of treasures, a cracked china pitcher that would serve as a vase for flowers!

How nimbly her fingers flew; how nimbly her feet; and when all was done, and a cup of daisies placed on the table, no princess ever experienced more pleasure in her royal apartments.

She had never felt half the beauty of daisies till now. She wondered at her former dullness. Perhaps she had trodden on their meek little faces sometime. She could have cried to think of it. Henceforth they should share her regard, claim indeed her tenderest and best.

Her hair she dressed with careful attention, not that she expected to see Samuel Dale again that day, not at all. And yet the careful dressing was for him. Her frock seemed to her dull and common, and she tied over it a little coquetish apron of white muslin, and at last, just for a moment's pleasure, she put on her Sunday boots and laced and tied them round her slender ankles; but to wear these of a week day was not to be thought of. She surveyed herself in the glass with smiling satisfaction. Could Samuel but have seen her thus!

It was near sunset when the market cart came rattling down the hill. Margaret was at the gate in a moment, but she no sooner saw her mother sitting straight and formal in her chair, her long veil drifting over her shoulder, and her shawl of black silk pinned precisely across her bosom, than Samuel receded somewhat; but when, without smiling or slackening the rein, she drove into the yard, and down the gravelled way, and Margaret perceived a new umbrella, with an ivory stick and a border of crimson, together with a willow work-basket, embellished with streaks of yellow and green, beside her in the cart, her faltering courage almost misgave her. Her mother, always a person of consequence in her eyes, seemed invested with new dignity.

Delight overcame her, however, when she really had the basket in her hands, and holding it up and turning it about, that she might take in all its artistic elegance at once, she cried, "A perfect beauty! Where did you find it, mother?"

"In town, to be sure; what a foolish question, child." And she springs lightly to the ground, and gives her bombazine dress a little shake.

Margaret began to be fairly shy, and her news lost its zest completely, when pointing to the heap of detached door-stones, the mother said, sharply, "What in the world is this? What have you been about here?"

Margaret hung her head; "Nothing much," she answered, and then reducing the whole affair to its lowest possibility, making little of the copperheads, and almost nothing of Samuel Dale, she explained; and this, after all, was the way she told her great news.

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Fairfax, when she heard to the end of the story, "I'd thank this young jackanapes, whoever he is, to come back and set up my doorsteps!" and she walked into the house without another word. Margaret had no heart now to speak of the bed-chamber she had furnished with such housewifely pride and pleasure. The pictures, the dainty curtains, all the pretty garniture seemed to her like the memory of a dream; and as she went silently about her household cares, she began to understand, she thought, what Samuel meant by the shadows he had spoken of in the morning.

When Mrs. Fairfax had partaken of tea, her reserve thawed a little, and by degrees she became communicative, and finally the great event of the day, the great event of her life, as she seemed to regard it, came out. She had been introduced to the son of a bishop! "Just think of it," she cried, "dressed in all my old market-day things!"

Margaret neither expressed surprise nor pleasure. She had been hurt by the previous coldness and severity of her mother, and besides her heart was preoccupied. Mrs. Fairfax understood in part the significance of this silence, and hastened to say that she had been quite upset by the day's experience, but that, however she might have appeared, she had really not been in the least out of humor. She had never before conceded to Margaret anything so

nearly approaching an apology. The girl had her new dignity, too, and somehow it commanded respect; and when the conversation flowed freely, as it did by and by, it was upon terms of greater equality than had hitherto existed between them.

Mrs. Fairfax had a good many incidents to relate, but all leading to the great event. She had, by the merest accident, stopped at Mrs. Briggs's on her way home, not suspecting in the least what was to befall her, when lo, and behold! she was ushered right into the drawing-room, and found herself standing face to face with Mr. John Lightwait, the bishop's son! "He called me Sister Fairfax," she said, proudly, "and held my hand ever so long!"

Margaret shrugged her shoulder; she was probably thinking of Samuel Dale, who was far enough from being a bishop's son.

Young brother Lightwait — (Mrs. Fairfax didn't believe he was so very young, not much younger than herself, in fact) — was the handsomest man she had ever set eyes on. Such beautiful hair, such nice little hands, and such lovely nails! And then his white neck-cloth, tied in, oh, the sweetest of knots! If Margaret could but see him!

But Margaret did not care about seeing him. "I am not so taken up with fine folks as you are, mother," she said.

Then Mrs. Fairfax answered, exultantly, "you will have to see him, my child, whether you care about it or not, and that pretty often; he is going to be stationed here! but as for being taken up with fine folks, I am sure I am free from that weakness." Then she told how she visited the poorest members of the church, how she gave Mrs. Spinner's little boy a new hat, and how she had helped to make shirts for old Mr. Beggerman, and of many other praiseworthy works she had done; and in the end she again referred to the bishop's son, as though the church was to be especially blessed in having a bishop's son for its pastor.

Margaret never contradicted her mother, and did not now, though none knew better than she her exceeding liability to the weakness she had disclaimed. She only said she would be very sorry to lose Father Goodman; that, for her part, she would not willingly exchange him even for a bishop.

"Nor I," said Mrs. Fairfax; but the words seemed mechanical, and directly she brought forth a little lace cap,

gayly set off with red ribbon. "I was determined," she said, "the bishop's son should never see me again in that horrid thing I wore this morning!"

"Father Goodman says fine feathers don't make a fine bird," replied Margaret, quietly.

"Dear me! I'm fairly tired of the name of Father Goodman! he ain't the only preacher in the conference, I hope!"

Margaret said she hoped not, and then the mother and daughter were silent for a long time. There would not indeed have existed a close sympathy between them if there had been close intimacy, which there never had been. There were radical and irrevocable differences in their original constitutions, that were always in wait, ready to produce irritation, if not anger.

The happiest moment was never quite secure, therefore, each holding her interior self in leash, as it were, for the time being, with the implied understanding that said leash was imminently liable to be slipped.

As before intimated, Mrs. Fairfax had, up to the very evening under review, regarded Margaret as a little girl, a mere child, and as *her* child who was to know only her will. There are women who consider children, especially their own children, as hindrances, nuisances, and plagues. They put them off, put them out of the way, ignore them, in fact, as far as possible. Mrs. Fairfax was a woman of this unmotherly organization. When she bought a new silk apron for herself, she bought one of checked cotton stuff for Margaret. She was only a little girl, and what better did she require! When it chanced that visitors were entertained of an evening, extra candles lighted, and after the refreshment, ghost stories told, about the pleasant fire, Margaret was sent to bed betimes, where she lay wide awake, hour after hour, listening to the hum of the voices, and contrasting the dark and cold loneliness of her chamber with the cheer and hospitable light and warmth below stairs.

When the travelling show made halt at the village, and all the young folks, dressed in their best, went to see the Babes in the Wood, represented in wax figures, with such beautiful white dresses, and such dazlingly pink cheeks, together with the robin red-breast, that sung just like any

live bird, and made believe to be sexton, with a degree of intelligence beggaring all description, Margaret remained at home, worked in the garden, or darned stockings, as the case might be, for always, in one way or another, the holiday was taken out of the holiday, for her. Her dissipation had, therefore, up to the time our story begins, and she was now in her sixteenth year, been chiefly confined to the teaching of a ragged class in the Sunday school, and the knitting of woollen stockings for the missionaries. True, these diversions were sometimes varied by attending a funeral, but this did not happen often. Since the pastorate of Father Goodman, and chiefly through his instrumentality, she had gone to church, excepting when her shoes were too badly worn, or when some like accident prevented; being led thither and home again in the hand of her mother. If she knew one young man from another, she had never evinced such knowledge by any outward sign, but doubtless she did know one from another, and it may be, too, that she had dreamed dreams, of which her mother had not dreamed that she dreamed.

"Come, Margaret," exclaimed Mrs. Fairfax, breaking the uneasy silence, as the clock from the mantel of the best room struck nine, and Margaret lighted the short end of a candle and went to bed. There was no good-night word and no good-night kiss between them. She left the candle to burn itself all out, just for the pleasure she had in surveying the decorations of her chamber, and the cup of daisies she placed close by the bedside where she could smell them after she could no longer see them.

That night, as she slept, it seemed to her that Samuel Dale put a ring on her finger, and that in shaking hands with Mr. Lightwait, the bishop's son, who was come to be their pastor, it slipped off, and was lost. She awoke with a cry of pain, and could hardly, for the moment, persuade herself that the vision was not reality. It passed from her mind, however, with the morning light, and it was not till years after, that she recollected and mused upon it.

It was on the evening of the second day since the transpiring of the incidents already recorded, that, as mother and daughter sat together, silently watching the clouds as they ran across the face of the moon, making fantastic shadows come and go, and giving a weird impression to the

commonest things, a sharp sound, like the ringing of iron against stone, startled and surprised them.

"What is that?" the mother demands, rather than inquires, rising, and looking upon Margaret almost angrily. Margaret says she doesn't know, but by this time her heart has told her what it is, and the ribbon on her bosom is all in a flutter.

"There it is again!" cries the mother. "Some wicked or drunken person is certainly about; really, a lone woman has reason to be afraid of her life!" And then she said she wished brother Lightwair were come. Father Goodman was too old to be of any account in case of danger. Margaret laughed. "Wolf is a very good protector," she said; but here he comes, wagging his tail as though he had found a friend. Anyhow, I ain't afraid."

"Of course not! And you'd laugh, I suppose, if you saw a murderer with his hand on my throat." And Mrs. Fairfax intercepted the dog, Wolf, who came crouching and whining, and opening his black mouth wide, and giving him a sharp box on the ear, called him stupid and good-for-nothing, and passing out of the house, went with an energetic step in the direction of the sounds, ringing out now continuously.

"O no, I wouldn't!" says Margaret, with good-natured satire, and she laughed again, with provoking heartiness. Another time she would have suppressed this inclination to mirthfulness, but she felt strong in the consciousness of a new ally. Passing through the house instead of around it, as her mother had done, she was already exchanging greetings with Samuel Dale, when her indignant ladyship bore down upon them, her broad cap-strings flapping about her shoulders like sails.

"Who on earth is making a racket about my house this time o' night!" she demanded, squaring about and putting herself in position.

Now, as to the time of night, the sun had not been set an hour, and as to the racket, it was not very alarming, certainly. Samuel Dale was not a person to be easily flurried, and he now possessed his soul in patience. Removing his hat, he leaned on his crow-bar, and explained. He was come to repair the damage incidentally done the door-steps in his encounter with the imps of the old enemy, about

which she had no doubt heard. He was sorry for the mischief, but hoped to make amends.

Mrs. Fairfax relented a little; old enemy was an epithet she loved to hear, and her imagination immediately invested the young man with a limited number of Christian graces.

"I am sure I am obliged to you," she said, "for your goodness to my little daughter."

"Not at all," answered Samuel; "not obleeged to me in the least; it was owing to your little Daisy; she behaved like an angel."

"I am glad to hear it," Mrs. Fairfax said, and she hastened to change the subject.

"Were you brought up to the mason's trade?" she asked.

Samuel by this time had slipped a tow apron over his head, and producing a bucket of mortar and a trowel, had set to work, cutting smooth the rough edges of the stones, and cementing them together as equably as though the distrustful eyes upon him were the friendliest in the world.

"No, ma'am," he answered, "I wasn't brought up to no trade, but I can turn my hand to a good many things, after a fashion."

"After a pretty nice fashion, I should say, too," remarked Mrs. Fairfax; she saw that the work was going to be a success, and had already calculated the advantage.

Margaret was happy; her new friend was doing himself such credit. The mother, seeing her delight, told her she had better go to bed. "I wonder at your imprudence," she said, "standing with your bare feet in the dew."

It was not often that Margaret had stood any other way in the dew, than with bare feet, and she said so, to the great annoyance of her mother, who was given to a show of fondness toward her, in the presence of strangers, simply for the sake of effect. "Go, because I tell you to, then," she said.

Woman though she was, Margaret was a child, too, and she began to cry.

"Maybe you'd ruther I come some other time?" Samuel exclaimed, throwing down his trowel, and slipping off the apron.

"O no, sir, by no means — not at all!" And Mrs. Fairfax, trembling lest the advantage upon which she had

counted might not accrue, after all, came nearer her man, by a step or two, and her disordered cap-strings settled themselves quite gracefully.

"There, little Daisy, stand on this!" and Samuel threw down his apron, and took up his trowel again.

Margaret glanced at her mother. "Certainly, my little wilful dear, stay if you like." Then to Samuel—"You are very good to mind the child."

"No, ma'am, I ain't good, not in that, nor in nothing, but in general it's my way to do purty much as I'd be done by, except it's in self-defence, or when the defence of somebody else requires a difference, like settin' on to them copperheads, 'tother day, for instance."

"O, sir, I'm so obliged to you! the nasty things! how many were there? My little girl didn't seem to say much about it."

Samuel demeaned himself very modestly; he didn't mind just how many there was, he said; three or four altogether he believed, but the biggest of 'em wasn't so long as his arm; it was no great thing to kill 'em.

Margaret could not endure that her hero should thus depreciate his achievement, and so must needs give evidence in his favor, adding, in the first place, one to the number of snakes, and afterward insisting that they were red as fire, and of hideous length.

"Red as fire!" cries Samuel, charmed with the exaggeration, and then, with strict adherence to truth, and perhaps to draw her out still further, he says they were about the color of an old copper cent, and not so long as his arm.

"Not so long as your arm, indeed! Why, the first one you killed reached half round my waist, and——"

What further she would have said Samuel prevented.

"And my arm would quite reach round your waist," he said, "with half a chance;" and seeing that Mrs. Fairfax frowned, he colored, and in his confusion struck the stone rather awkwardly with his hammer; a sharp piece flew off, and grazing the bare arm of Margaret, caused a very painful, though not serious abrasion, the blood flowing profusely, and her face turning deadly pale.

"God 'a' mercy!" he cried; "what have I done? Bruised to bleedin' death the sweetest, whitest daisy that

ever growed in mortal ground ! God 'a' mercy on me ! " And he bent reverently over her, and waved his hands to and fro as if invoking blessings.

He would have made an eloquent study for an artist, as he thus stood, this poor, rude man, in coarse garments, his silence so tender, and his toil-worn hands waving so gently over the fair head he did not dare to touch.

Even Mrs. Fairfax seemed affected, for she assured him that the wound was only skin-deep, and that, notwithstanding the free flow of blood, the danger was all in his fancy. But in her sympathy, if sympathy she felt, she did not forget her own interest, and concluded by begging that he would not allow so trifling an incident to interrupt the business in hand.

" Your work is going to do you credit, young man," she says, " and it ain't worth while to be hindered. Come, Margaret, I'm ashamed of you ! do rouse yourself up a little ! So, — I knew you could ; here, give me your handkerchief ! and she bound up the arm very roughly, as it seemed to Samuel.

" I'll go and fetch Father Goodman," he said, bending low, and speaking almost in a whisper.

" Father nonsense ! " cries Mrs. Fairfax ; " the child would do better if you paid less attention to her."

The sides of nature must have cracked, if Samuel had not spoken out, now.

" You are a woman," he says, " and a mother, and it isn't becomin' in me, a stranger and a man, to be a pintin' out your duty to you ; you know what's right to be done better 'an I do, I s'pose, but I can tell you one thing, an' it's this ; but just for one of God's happy accidents, you'd a had a shader in your house to-day, instid o' that precious bit 'o sunshine a-lyin' at your feet ! "

" One of God's accidents ! " repeated Mrs. Fairfax sneeringly.

" I knowed what I was a-sayin' and I know I couldn't 'a' been chose to do the work I done ; I never done nothin' to make me worthy of bein' so chose ; but thank God, I happened to be in the way."

Mrs. Fairfax, softened a little, in spite of herself, as this devout spirit shamed her cold pretence.

" If you don't mind," she says, " you may help me get the

child into the house ; the bed will be the best place for her." And she added, " If you had only minded me, my wilful darling ! "

" Poor lamb ! " says Samuel, and he takes her in his strong arms as easily as though she were a lamb in very truth. She smiled upon him from her pillows, and said she was better, and that she would be almost well if the bandage were but loosened. Then, dropping on one knee by the low bedside, he loosened the handkerchief, and wound it again with the skilful tenderness of one who had done nothing else, but dress wounds all his life.

Afterwards he knelt by that low bed again, and took Margaret in his arms, recalling this night, when she smiled upon him from her pillows, and saying it was the night of their bridal.

But before that time comes there is much to be said, and much to be unsaid. Much to be lived, and much to be lived down. We must wait.

When Mrs. Fairfax parted with Samuel that night, she took occasion to speak of her sick darling in terms of the greatest concern, as well as fondness, but he was no sooner gone than she berated her soundly for weakly yielding to the sight of a little blood, and suffering herself to be taken in the arms of a man she had hardly seen. It was a shameful thing, she said, and for her part, she never permitted her most intimate male friend to touch her hand. No, indeed ! not she. It may be remarked here that this frozen austerity was not perceptible to the naked eye.

As Margaret lay awake, tearful and troubled, that night, she heard a sound like the noise of footsteps going about her room. " Who is there ? " she said, putting out her hand, and feeling in the darkness, for she was not afraid. The steps came trotting to her bedside, and the rough, shaggy head of Wolf put itself under her hand, as though he would say, " It is I, my little mistress ; go to sleep, you are protected."

He was not accustomed to remain in the house of nights, and had cunningly concealed himself at the time he was used to be put out of doors, as though he had understood the discordance between mother and daughter, and was taking part with Margaret. Perhaps he remembered the box on the ear.

CHAPTER II.

MARGARET VISITS A MEDIUM.



THE following evening, when the day's work was done, Samuel Dale dressed in all his best, and with a flower in his button-hole came to inquire about Margaret. Mrs. Fairfax received him very coldly, as coldly as she could with consistent reference to the unfinished steps.

"I couldn't work to-day, nor couldn't rest to-night," he said, "without comin'. I would have writ you a letter to say how much I blame myself, if I could, but I ain't much used to a pen, so I come as you see, and brought this little flower; I found it in the meadow, and" —

"O thank you! how beautiful! how good of you!" and Mrs. Fairfax took the flower and tucked it under her belt!

Really, this young man is not a dunce, she thought, and excusing herself in a tone of insinuating sweetness, she disappeared, returning presently with a little flimsy cap upon her head, all alight with red ribbons.

Perhaps Samuel had some perception of her mistake, and was seeking to set himself right, when he said: "My mind has been took up all day with one sad picter, as I went along the furrer."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Fairfax; "your mind ought to have been took up some part o' the time with your Bible!"

"I don't find revelation all in the lids of the Bible," says Samuel; "I find it in the fields sometimes, and sometimes I find it in my own heart, bad as it is."

"What an idea! What an awful idea!" cries Mrs. Fairfax.

Samuel did not answer this exclamation, but asked instead, if the handsome house yonder was not the parsonage,

adding when he had received an affirmative reply, "I thought so, and a kind of rigor, like, goes over me whenever I look at it; something is goin' to happen agin me, belongin' to that place."

"That can't be!" Mrs. Fairfax said; "for our new preacher, who is to come next month, is the sweetest man you ever beheld." And then she said he was a bishop's son! Samuel made no answer. He was drumming with his fingers on the table by which he sat, and seemed to be thinking to himself.

"Didn't you understand?" Mrs. Fairfax says, "Our new preacher is old Bishop Lightwait's son!"

"D—n it! what do I care!" exclaims Samuel, and he rises to go.

Then Mrs. Fairfax bemoans his wickedness, and hopes that the Bishop's son, who is very eloquent, may succeed in melting his stubborn heart, and bringing him into the church.

"As to my heart," says Samuel, "I'm afeared sometimes it is stubborn, but I was took in the church, by probation, when I was fifteen years old, and six months after, regular, and I've been a member ever sence."

"Bless you, I wouldn't have thought it!" cries Mrs. Fairfax. And she begs pardon for what she has said as to required change of heart, and giving up the world. "You misled me," she says. "Of course we church members can say what we please, and think what we please! I am so glad to know! I thought you was a worldly person, to be sure;" and she brought forth a pie, and insisted upon Samuel's partaking of it, meantime imparting such scandal about Brother B. and Sister C. as we are not privileged to repeat, inasmuch as it would not have been whispered to unregenerate ears.

"I'm afeared now," says Samuel, "that you are misled further than before. I'm in good and regular standin' with the church, as fur's I know, but I ain't in good an' regular standin' with myself. I was young when I was struck under conviction. I went on to the anxious seat, and they all got round me and prayed and talked about hell bein' paved with infant's skull bones, an' about the worm that never dies waitin' to devour me, an' all that, till my wits fairly went wild, and then they rounded to with talk about grace and mercy an' all them meltin' things, an' at that I

broke out exhortin, and then they cried one an' all, "Here, Lord, here's another soul we've got for you! a brand snatched from the burning! glory hallelujah! I was flustered, like, an' didn't know what saved me, nor whether I was saved or not; then they told me that my case wasn't uncommon, but that to speak my doubts would be to grieve the Spirit; that I'd already give full and sufficient evidence of havin' got a new heart, and that I must unite with the church right away; and so I did, on probation, and afterwards, regular. And that, ma'am, is the way it stands with me."

"And you did very wisely to join the church at once," says Mrs. Fairfax. "Your case seems to me to have showed specially sound conversion, and you have never backslid?"

"I don't know whether I've backslid or not," says Samuel, looking down; "my attention is liable to be drawed off when I'm a-hearin' the movinest sermon, if it happens that there is a purty girl afore me."

"The external observances are the main thing," says Mrs. Fairfax complacently, and then she says, "if you attend to them punctual, you have no call for self-accusation, none at all, Brother Dale!" And she took his hand, in token of her sisterly regard, it is to be supposed.

"I wish I could think so," Samuel answered, "but I can't." And turning away his face, he went on: "I don't often say anything about my religion, if I've got any, but I thought I'd say this to you in the beginnin', so that neither yourself nor," he hesitated and added, changing the form of his sentence probably, "so that neither you nor anybody would think me any better than I am."

"And I'm sure I'm obliged to you for saying it in the beginning," Mrs. Fairfax replied, and she particularly emphasized "beginning," and gave the hand she still retained a little squeeze, by way of further emphasis.

Samuel did not return the pressure; his mind seemed preoccupied, and he asked, as if in pursuance of some train of thought, when Father Goodman was going to leave them, and if the bishop's son was to come right away, and then he said it was nothing to him, he didn't know why he asked, and with an abrupt good-night, was gone.

"The young man is really good-looking," mused Mrs.

Fairfax as she shut up the house, "and older than I thought, too. Younger men than he have married wives of my age!" And she looked in the glass and adjusted her little cap. As she unclasped her belt, the rose fell to the ground; "Let it go," she said, and as she passed to and fro she trod on it again and again.

She went to bed without seeing Margaret, who, being restless and weary, meanwhile, arose and sat at her window, noting how softly the moonlight lay upon the distant fields, the fields where Samuel had been at work that day. The cup of now faded daises was in her lap, and as she picked the withered leaves and threw them away, she said to herself, "these are the misfortunes that I am picking out of his life." So she pleased herself with innocent fancies.

The next evening, and the next, and the next, Samuel came and inquired about Margaret, but Margaret was kept well out of sight. "She is not yet well enough to brave the night air, the poor, dear child," says Mrs. Fairfax, and so she puts him off; making herself familiar, fond almost, in the meantime, and seeking by a thousand nameless arts to establish some sort of relations between herself and him.

"We are so lonely here," she says, "my little daughter and I, your visits are quite a charity. Do come often, Brother Dale, or Samuel; which shall I call you? And then she laughs girlishly, and tells him he doesn't seem in the least like a brother to her. It was after some such talk as this, that she said to him, one evening, taking both his hands in hers, in the sweet sincerity of her importunity: "Isn't there something, dear Samuel, I can do for you, to pay you for all your goodness?"

"No, ma'am," said Samuel, "nothing at all." And then he said he was sure there was nothing to pay for.

"O, yes, this precious flower, if nothing else; you see I wear it yet, and next my heart, too—for I assure you I have a heart; just feel how it beats! Dear me, I am so foolish!"

She had gathered the flower that afternoon from her own garden, and with her own hand. But so the desired effect was produced, what matter!

The encouragement was not very encouraging, but Mrs. Fairfax was a persevering woman. She would neither give

up the hands nor the importunity, something she must and would do.

"If you insist so much, there is one thing," Samuel said, stammering.

Mrs. Fairfax hung her head. "I am trembling like a leaf," she said; I must sit somewhere!" He did not take her to his knee, but told her like the honest-hearted fellow he was, that he loved her daughter Margaret, and did not believe that ever in his life he should love anybody else.

Mrs. Fairfax did not seem surprised nor displeased. She found a place to sit, however, and replied calmly, very calmly, that the intelligence made her more than happy, but the dear child was so young, he must not think of speaking of love to her, not yet, not for a long time, not for a year, at least. And Samuel promised sacredly that for twelve months he would not speak of love to Margaret, and Mrs. Fairfax gave him a little kiss on the forehead, and he went away with a light heart. A great deal may be accomplished in a year, she thought to herself; a pretty story it is if that little chit has come up to be my rival, we'll see!

After this understanding Samuel became quite intimate in his friendship with Mrs. Fairfax, — dangerously confidential, in fact, — he did many chores for her, and she managed always to have some little commission in his hands, and petted and scolded, and praised and blamed him at her pleasure; sometimes she would give him a playful box on the ear, and other times, reward him with a kiss.

He often supped at her table, drove her to town now and then, made her presents of a domestic and serviceable character, and of Sunday evening, sung with her out of the same hymn-book.

Often she took occasion to whisper to him, "Remember your promise!" But there was no need to remind him of it; he was blessed enough in being in the same room with Margaret, in hearing her voice, in watching her work, or play, and if, by any means he could add to her enjoyment, he was more than blessed. He could talk and laugh and jest with Mrs. Fairfax — he was not afraid of her — she was like himself, of the earth; but Margaret, he worshipped her, from afar, and it would not have surprised him to see little wings growing out of her shoulders. He grew

more and more diffident as her beauty unfolded, day by day, his rude hands were not worthy to touch so fair a flower, but he would make excuses to be near her, and sit silent for hours, all graciously suffused with her presence.

Mrs. Fairfax kept always an eye upon him, and in spite of his familiarity with her, so restrained him in his intercourse with Margaret, that he could not for his life call her Daisy any more, though he had done so on the first day of their acquaintance. He felt obliged to say Miss Margaret now, and when he was dying to walk alone with her in the lane, to ask her mother, instead.

Mrs. Fairfax had succeeded beyond her expectations ; he was greatly under her influence ; she might have him altogether in her power yet ; stranger things had been done by women before now.

Margaret's dresses were tucked up, her hair was clipped off. How she cried when they fell in her lap, one by one, those shining curls, and lay there, a silken heap, but smiled again, and was almost pacified when Samuel, hiding the tremor of his lip under his hat-brim, said to her, "Never mind, you look just as pretty as ever, any how !"

Mrs. Fairfax still pretended to esteem Margaret a mere child ; it may be that she did so esteem her, for it is difficult for any of us to know when the child we have held on our knee becomes a man or woman ; but, whatever she felt personally, she perceived that Margaret was beginning to be treated as a woman. "We will put an end to this," she said, and so it came about that the shining locks fell in the girl's lap, and lay there all in a heap, one day.

It was on the evening of this same day that as Margaret sat on the new door-steps watching the glory of the sunset, — all the grand picture she had ever seen, — Samuel Dale came up the path and seated himself beside her ; he had but just time to say, however, "You look just as pretty as ever," when Mrs. Fairfax appeared, and took matters in her own hands, by seating herself between the pair. "What do you suppose I have been thinking about, Samuel ?" she said, in her sweetest manner. Samuel said he was sure he did not know, and his tone implied that he did not care.

"Why, of you, to be sure, you ugly bear !"

"Baly, is it possible ? Couldn't you find anything profitable to think about ?"

"You ungrateful creature ; I've a great mind not to tell you what I've been thinking."

"Well, ma'am as you please."

"You don't deserve to know, but I can't really get vexed with you." And she told him that she had been thinking that he ought to marry, and she had selected just the wife for him ; and so she went on and finally made as close a likeness of herself as could be.

"Such a wife wouldn't suit me in a single particular," Samuel answered. "I've got my mind made up, and every day makes me more and more sure that I shall never change it." And as he was saying this, he put his arm about the neck of Wolf, and drew him between himself and Mrs. Fairfax, who told him playfully that he was ill-natured and had better go home.

Samuel said he was of her opinion, and rising at once, went down the path and out of the gate, without another word.

"Here, pet! Here, beauty!" Mrs. Fairfax called after Wolf, who was scrambling over the fence behind Samuel. He stopped and looked round. "You must go back; old boy," he said, kindly, patting the great head of the dog; but when he went forward again, Wolf went too, running between his legs, licking his hands, and in all ways he knew manifesting his fondness.

"I can't bear to drive him back outright," Samuel called out, "so if you don't mind, Mrs. Fairfax, I'll bring him back to-morrow night."

She did not mind of course, and with his shaggy tail curled to a ring on his back, the dog trotted off behind the young man, and both were soon out of sight.

"I a'most wish I had never seen the fellow," Mrs. Fairfax exclaimed. And then she drew a comparison that was very unfavorable to Samuel, between him and the bishop's son.

Margaret made no reply, and all the next day nothing was said of Samuel, but when, at sunset Mrs. Fairfax announced her intention of running up to Mrs. Whiteflock's for half an hour, Margaret very well understood that the visit was in some way connected with him.

She was scarcely out of sight when Samuel appeared, fresh, trim, smiling, and bearing in his hand a bouquet of the fairest daises.

"I don't know how it is," he said, as he dropped the flowers in Margaret's lap, "but somehow, these things always make me think o' you. I hope you like 'em."

"Of all things!" she answered, taking them up and pressing them to her lips. And then she said, "I didn't use to care so much about 'em."

"I always liked 'em," he replied, "but I never envied 'em, as I know of, till now."

Margaret hung her head to hide her blushes, and the next moment, with artful evasion, said, he ought not to envy the poor things their beauty, — they were withering already.

"It wasn't thieir beauty I envied 'em," he said, in his honest, simple way, "but I did envy 'em for all that, and if they are a-witherin' I think they ought to be happy even to die."

"You speak riddles," Margaret said, at the same time caressing the great ears and big round neck of Wolf (who sat beside her), in a way that was very provoking to Samuel.

He stood silent before her so long that she said at last, piqued, perhaps: "Why don't you ask for mother? Of course you came to see her."

"No, Daisy, I saw her on my way here."

Margaret looked serious, and he, seating himself beside her and picking the flowers that lay in her lap to pieces, tossed the broken flakes away.

"I thought you meant to give them to me!" Margaret said, pettishly putting back his hand.

"So I did," he answered; nevertheless he continued to toss away the flowers; perhaps for the sake of having his hand thus put back, for it was only by this chance that he had ever touched her hand since the first day of their acquaintance.

When they were all broken and tumbled and lying white at her feet, Margaret gave him a pretty scolding, and told him she would never forgive him as long as she lived.

"I'm sorry," he said, "I wasn't half a-thinkin' of what I was doin', I wasn't, raly!" and then he said if she liked daisies so much, maybe she wouldn't mind goin' across the hill to the meader where they growed; if she wouldn't mind, he could fill her apron with them in a few minutes!

Margaret did not require much coaxing, and leaving Wolf to take care of the house, they set off, talking, as they went, of the moonlight, the ripple of the waters, the dew on the grass, of a thousand indifferent matters, while their thoughts were all setting another way.

In a green hollow — “the lap of the meader,” Samuel called it — they came upon the daisies, and had a little quarrel as to whether the tall or the short ones were the prettier, and Margaret in make-believe anger threw handfuls of them over her admirer, who, as he picked them from his hair and beard, felt that so charming a creature did not exist in all the world. Then they made up, and agreed to gather from the same bed, and in the gathering, their hands often met, their voices took a softer tone, and softer, till they almost spoke in whispers, — and we all know what comes of such things. When the apron was filled with daisies, they required to be assorted, and to do this required time, and as the pleasing work prolonged itself, Samuel sung snatches of old songs, and tender bits of love ditties, out of tune to be sure, and with sad omissions and substitutions of words and rhymes, but full of sweet meaning and passionate pathos, and, to Margaret, masterly triumphs of executive skill.

If my fair reader shrug her shoulder and uplift her eyebrow, let me say to her that these young persons were quite in the honest simplicity of nature, with all its exuberance of hope and trust, unrestrained and unembarrassed by the conventional restrictions that would necessarily regulate your conduct. Their acquaintance too, it must be remembered, had been commenced in circumstances singularly calculated to inspire confidence, and encourage familiarity; then neither of them had any one else upon whom to throw some of the burden of tenderness that must needs accumulate in every heart; they were man and woman, and as all men and women thirst with insatiable longing for something nearer, truer, sweeter than they yet have known, — than it is perhaps possible for our poor humanity to know, — they were, after all, not very unlike the rest.

Just as naturally as the young rose to the sun and dew, their hearts had unfolded, each to the smile of the other, and they were lovers without their own consent. The village clock was striking ten, when Mrs. Fairfax, measurably calm and collected, if not serene with herself, set out for home.

Mrs. Whiteflock had communicated intelligence, that in some sort reconciled her to the defeat of her matrimonial scheme with Samuel Dale; he had left a sweetheart behind him! Mrs. Whiteflock was sure of this, positively sure. She had herself seen him several distinct times writing letters on tinted paper; moreover, she had plied him with questions, and he had the same as owned the fact to be as she supposed; he had a sweetheart, a great way off; those had been his very words.

If Mrs. Whiteflock could have removed Samuel's Sunday coat, trowsers and blue silk pocket-handkerchief, together with divers and sundry other articles and appurtenances, she might have discovered, safe between the leaves of his Testament, and in the very bottom of his old hair trunk, the veritable love-letters, all inscribed to Margaret Fairfax, and affluent with all he dare not speak. She had not this privilege, however, and did not suspect that the sweetheart, a great way off, was her neighbor's child, and Mrs. Fairfax, her suspicions happily diverted, went home measurably reconciled; it was so much easier to resign her hopes in favor of a woman she had never seen, whose name she did not even know. She almost exulted in the thought of what pain she was prepared to inflict upon Margaret. For herself, she did not suffer pain; she was provoked, frustrated in one direction, but one was not all, and long before she reached home she was living over in memory the moment when the bishop's son had held her hand. Her little cap with its red ribbons, had scarcely been soiled on Samuel's account. She rejoiced in that; then there were the steps, clear gain, besides a good many other gains, and for the future she would compel him to serve her to the extent of her pleasure! Hadn't he told her things? and wasn't he in her power?

She found Margaret at the door, sitting demure and quiet in the moonlight, her blue eyes drooping dreamily, and Wolf dozing at her feet.

"Have you seen Samuel?" she said directly.

"Yes; he stopped, and, leaving Wolf, went away again. Haven't you seen him?" (He was but just gone that moment.)

No, Mrs. Fairfax had not seen him; she had not cared to see him; it was Mrs. Whiteflock she went to see. "And,

by the way," she said, "he is going to be married, Mrs. Whiteflock tells me. Would you have believed it?"

"What of it?" said Margaret; "why shouldn't he marry if he wants to?"

"He should, of course; I'm sure it's nothing to me. I told it just as I would tell any other news; but Mrs. Whiteflock knows it to be true."

"Mrs. Whiteflock knows a great deal," replied Margaret.

"She can't help knowing what she sees and hears; what Sam tells her, to be sure."

"You might call his name right, I should think," replied Margaret, "even if he is going to be married!" Then she said she hoped he would get a wife good enough for him, and for her part she was sleepy, and thought she would go to bed.

This was not all sheer affectation, though some of it was. Margaret felt safe, much safer than she would have felt if she had been older. She knew by that instinctive perception that is wiser than any other wisdom, that she was beloved by Samuel, and if he loved her what cared she for gossip? Love meant marriage, and marriage meant supreme felicity, thenceforward and forever.

"Mrs. Fairfax was well deceived; the girl didn't care for Samuel, after all, she thought, and she proceeded to unfold another budget of news, all about the new preacher, the Bishop's son, who was to come to them now very soon. "His name," she said, "is John Hamlyn; a nice name, isn't it?" Then she repeated it; John Hamlyn Lightwait, rolling it as a sweet morsel under her tongue. John was her own father's name, and she didn't like it when she used to hear her mother call it every day, but when John came to be joined with Hamlyn, and was the name of a Bishop's son withal, why it sounded so different! The name of the sister, who was to keep house for John Hamlyn, was Katharine, and she was called Kate at home. "Isn't it strange that she should be called Kate?" queried Mrs. Fairfax. "So common, quite like the rest of us, to be sure!"

Then she said to Margaret, "I wish I had you to name over again; I would christen you something that had a little style, I'll warrant you!" And she concluded in the end, that she could have selected nothing that would have been altogether so queenly as Katharine! Mrs.

Fairfax, it will be seen, did not rely much upon Mrs. Fairfax, in her simple self. O no! She relied upon her shoes, and the feather in her bonnet, the buckle of her belt, the carpet on her floor, the drapery at her window, on *seeming*, in short, not in *being*!

She could not think of wearing a dress suited to her means and condition; oh, no! She must have one just like that of Mrs. Goldbag, who rode in her carriage, and had nothing to do from year's end to year's end. She loved to be seen where charitable women congregate; loved to be officious, and did not mind putting herself out a little for the sake of being so, but it was the distinction she loved, and not the duty. She sang loud in church, and with unction, and in class-meetings was a kind of *sal volatile* to the tearful and troubled. She knew the direct road to heaven, and could point it out to those who saw less clearly, with a cheery confidence that was very comforting.

Her tastes were religious, rather than her feelings; but her appearance of smartness, the lace on her sleeve, and the smooth glove on her hand, stood her in grand stead; and yet there was that about her dress that suggested the possibility that the carefulness was external; a lack of soundness and substantiality in the things seen that, somehow, suggested fears for the unseen.

Let us hope that she was in this respect altogether singular. The daughter, though in some sort liable to the weakness of the mother, possessed more largeness of soul, more sweetness of heart, more originality, and more integrity of character. She might, through impulse, commit greater errors than the mother, and in her folly still be better than the mother in her prudence.

As they were about to separate for the night, Margaret ventured to ask for a pair of new slippers. She was thinking of Samuel, and Mrs. Fairfax took the alarm. "You have shoes to wear to meeting, and what more do you require?" she said, adding directly: "I wish you to be punctual at church when our new preacher comes, and not suffer your mind to be drawn off, so that he may see you have a pious mother, and see, and see, and" — She could not think what more she wished him to see, and abruptly changed the subject.

Margaret had no heart to say anything more concerning

the slippers, and nothing further was said of Samuel that night, nor for days afterward. He came and went, rendering various services to the mother, as usual, and never seeing the daughter alone, but steadily growing in favor with the one and out of favor with the other.

Thus matters stood at the beginning of June, at which time Father Goodman was gone, and the Bishop's son installed. It was raining, and as Mrs. Fairfax sat by a little low fire with her knitting, and Margaret went about the morning work, they were surprised by the flapping down of a great black umbrella at the door.

Who ever has seen the brown hull of a ripe nut fall away, and a round, fat, white worm tumbling out, has in his memory a pretty correct symbol of Mrs. Whiteflock, as she appeared dropping her camlet cloak, and settling at the hearthstone of Mrs. Fairfax.

"Well, of all things! Mrs. Whiteflock, have you rained down?" Thus Mrs. Fairfax.

"I don't wonder you're surprised. I thought I'd surprise you for once!" And Mrs. Whiteflock laughed by way of showing her good will. Mrs. Fairfax laughed too; laughed a great while, and a great deal in proportion to the time expended, as the most cordial method of expressing consideration and welcome.

"I'm so glad!" (Laughing.)

"Well, I am so glad too!" (Laughing.)

"Margaret, (without laughter) do help Sister Whiteflock to untie her bonnet-strings. Why, how awkward you are, child."

"Come to the fire, now, and dry your things. (Laughing again.) Margaret put on another stick. (No laughter.) How do you do? anyhow." (Laughter renewed.)

"O, I'm able to take my portion, thank you." (Laughing.)

"And how is the dear children? Martha, and Mary, and Madeline, and Lucinda, and Sally, and Jane Ann, and Charles, and Wesley, and Peter, and Cartright, and all?"

"I don't wonder you stop, Mrs. Fairfax. I a'most forget their names myself, sometimes, fifteen years married, and thirteen of 'em!"

"Thirteen, to be sure! Well, after all, you've no reason to complain; they are all so nice and well-behaved. I was

just saying to Margaret that I didn't know such fine children anywhere, and eight or ten of 'em are perfect beauties, as I have said to Margaret many a time."

Mrs. Fairfax had never said anything of the sort, and probably had never considered till that moment whether or not the children of her neighbor were good or bad looking, but it was a pleasant thing to say, and she said it; her conscience was accommodating, and she sometimes, as now, took advantage of it. And Mrs. Whiteflock was in the habit of returning these civilities by praising everything belonging to her neighbor, and disparaging all she had at home. "Dear me!" she said upon this occasion, "my children are nothing for looks! And there is Peter, as ugly as a mud fence! he takes after his father, while the other twelve favor me. But the handsomest of 'em don't compare with your Margaret. Where is she? Ah, here! What a pretty teacup that is you are washing, dear; but what do you think I heard somebody say about you?"

Margaret blushed scarlet. She was sure she didn't know.

Mrs. Fairfax, who had been of late wilfully shutting the truth from herself, saw that red writing, received its meaning at a glance, and was displeased.

"Don't be putting nonsense in the child's head," she said. Mrs. Whiteflock felt her mistake. "By the bye," she inquired, only anxious to say something, "who put up those new door-steps for you?" No answer. Mrs. Fairfax was busy with her knitting.

"They're so nice. Did you have a mason from town?" Mrs. Fairfax shook her head, absently.

"I ask because I thought maybe you employed the mason that built the new vestry to the church. I never saw a nicer piece o' work, anyhow."

Margaret was smiling as well as blushing now; her mother was being forced to hear the praises of Samuel Dale, though she would not speak them.

"Did they cost a mint o' money," Mrs. Whiteflock continued, still referring to the door-steps. "I've a good mind to get new ones too!"

"They are just the old steps, reset;" Mrs. Fairfax replied, irritably, "and the cost is hardly worth mentioning;" then in tones sweetly modulated, "I believe I

haven't asked one word about your old man ; is he busy as ever ? ”

“ He's the same old sixpence, every way,” Mrs. Whiteflock answered carelessly, continuing with animation : “ I did think those steps were new ! ”

“ Not at all ; and how are Whiteflock's headaches ? he used to have 'em so bad, I remember.”

“ They must have been dressed off new, or something, those steps must.”

“ But about Peter's headaches, Sister Whiteflock ? ”

“ 'Pon my word, I don't know ; but I guess I'd a-heard of it if he'd a-had 'em very bad ; men are such a bother when they're sick ! And now I come to think, I heard Samuel saying something or other about your steps.”

Mrs. Fairfax slyly twitched the sleeve of her friend ; “ Tell me,” she said, “ when it was I saw Peter Whiteflock last ? Was it at quarterly meeting ? ”

“ Very likely. Oh, now I know what Samuel said.”

“ If you please,” interposed Mrs. Fairfax, you and I will go into the parlor. I can't see to turn my seam here.”

And leaving Margaret to prepare the dinner, and to muse in sad disquiet, the two women withdrew to the best room, and when the door was closed behind them, the real purpose of Mrs. Whiteflock's visit came out. The Bishop's son had been to see her. The very first call he had made, too ! wasn't she honored ! Oh, she liked him so much ! he was so handsome ! and he had such a bad cold ! and he was so pious, and so gracious, and his coat fitted so beautiful ! and he was so fond of her apple pie ! Just a plain pie too, but he praised it, as though it had come from the French baker's ! “ And what do you think, Sister Fairfax, he said about you ? ”

“ Bless your dear heart, what was it ? ”

“ Well, he wanted to know who that fine-looking woman was in the white shawl, and said he would make it a point to see you very soon, and then he asked if that beautiful little girl in the pew with you was your daughter.”

“ He said *little* girl, you are quite sure ? ”

O yes, Mrs. Whiteflock was quite sure, and of course he spoke of the child merely in compliment to the mother.

These were slight grounds for vantage, to be sure, but Mrs. Fairfax so esteemed them and was flattered. She did

not say to her friend that she had already been introduced to the Bishop's son, and that he had evidently forgotten her, not she.

"There was one circumstance connected with his visit that I can't understand." Mrs. Whiteflock continued, and she bent low, and spoke almost in a whisper, "He would go down to see Peter. I couldn't prevent it. I said Peter was busy, and then I said he was away from home, and I would send him to the parsonage; but all wouldn't do. Down he went, just as if he had been there twenty times, and, would you believe, he stayed a long hour. Of course I couldn't get a word out of Peter's head."

In order to understand the full force of this communication, it will be necessary to state that the husband of Mrs. Whiteflock was a person of equivocal position, even in his own household; that any considerable intimacy existed between himself and his wife would have been doubted most seriously, but for the cloud of witnesses. He never went abroad with her; when she entertained visitors he did not sit at the table, and she never addressed him in terms implying social equality.

He was, indeed, a singular formation, seeming hardly to belong to the organic creation; he was of immense bulk, as it were from accretion, and not from the assimilating process of growth; neither had he determined proportions or symmetry of outline; in short he was a large, solid, opaque body, shining chiefly by light reflected from his wife.

No one ever spoke of Mr. and Mrs. Whiteflock, but of Mrs. Whiteflock and Peter, and when he was personally addressed, his given name was apt to be repeated with compassionate frequency, thus: "How do you do, Peter?" "Are you pretty well, Peter?" "Take a chair, Peter!" "Come again, Peter!" He had a kind of workshop fitted up in the cellar at home, and it was perhaps from living so much in the damp and shade that he came to have the look of a sprout, and to be almost passive in his existence. He was master of no trade, but his occupations were various, and he might be employed one day a-making shoes for the children, another in soldering legs in broken pots, another in braiding door-mats, and yet other days in still more ignoble employments. He did not belong to the church, he did not

belong to anything, nor did anything belong to him, not his wife, nor his child, nor his house, nor his farm, nor anything that he had. He had great possessions, and yet was dispossessed; he was not a fool, but he was worse, he was not presentable. To pay him customary respect was to embarrass him; therefore, by common consent he was left out.

This man possessed one remarkable gift, variously interpreted, but at all events, investing him, when the fit was on, with singular powers; he was sometimes enabled to speak with tongues, sometimes to prophesy, and sometimes, as it appeared, to talk with spirits. This gift now and then brought his neighbors to him as suppliants. When a man lost his wife, if it happened that he had been attached to her, he forthwith sought out this opaque, mysterious Peter, and from his gloomy cellar not unfrequently returned with his heart and spirit wonderfully encouraged and strengthened. His visitors came to him mostly in the night time, for it was held a disreputable thing to countenance the pretensions of so strange a creature, and no man said to his brother, except it were in a whisper, what he had seen or heard during those mysterious interviews. Some more marvelous experience than common, did after all, get itself uttered now and then. Some distraught mother, perhaps, who had seen the cold clods heaped between her and the sweet eyes of her baby, would come from this dim cellar crying for joy, and boldly proclaiming that she had seen her darling; seen it as plain as she had ever seen it in life; that it was not dead; removed a little from her sight, that was all. Such stories did get themselves told, but they got themselves hushed up, too, and she that had cried for joy, not unfrequently got ashamed of her report. It was hysterics, it was hallucination, it was morbid impressibility. So the doctor said, and for her part, she didn't know what to think. She could not quite get over the first impression, to be sure, but one thing she could do, she could be silent, and moreover, keep away from Peter for the future.

The young folks who were in love would see him against all prohibition and all authority, but this was a light offence compared with seeking spiritual comfort at his hands, and was generally laughed at as a joke, and passed over without serious objection.

If a farmer found disease breaking out among his cattle, he was likely to make some excuse for seeing Peter, and incidentally to make mention of the calamity, for it was admitted that he had some inexplicable gift, the exercise of which was especially friendly to the lower order of creation. He could remove callous excrescences from the legs of oxen and horses by the muttering of a few strange words, the cutting of a circle in water, or some other like manoeuvre, and he was especially successful in restoring wall eyes, and in causing hair to grow on naked and indurated surfaces. Most of his neighbors came, therefore, to be indebted to him for one favor or another, and a kindly feeling, slightly blent with pity, prevailed toward him. If he had made gain of his art, he would probably have been accused of being in league with the devil, but he did not thus make gain, so the probability was somewhat less imminent.

At the raising, at the vendue, at the tavern, of a rainy afternoon, Peter was never seen; he was fond of the church, but he was not made at home there, and unless it were in some dim corner, of an evening, he seldom sat in the congregation. His wife, or Mrs. Whiteflock—nobody thought of calling her his wife—was ashamed of him, and up to this time had made no pretence of anything else. Sometimes when she was surrounded with her friends, and she was quite a leader in society, he stood without the door and admired her fine manners, and fine dress, and when he had thus filled himself full of delight, went back to the humble avocations of his cellar without one jealous pang. He was not at home with himself, much less with any one else, there seemed to be no place into which he fitted, and as he was never obtrusive, the mysterious current of his life moved on toward the great eternity, without exciting much interest or remark.

Thus he stood; not in dishonor, but with no definite and acknowledged relations to society, or even to his own family, at the time to which our story belongs. Mrs. Whiteflock bought and sold, hired men and dismissed them, went and came, feasted and fasted, without any reference to him.

"Tell me, my dear," she said, when they had done with the Bishop's son, "what is the secret about the doorsteps? for of course, as I ought to have seen at first, it was not my Peter you cared to talk about."

"It's a long story, and you must never tell."

"No never!"

"We all have our troubles, I suppose?"

"Oh, to be sure. I know I have mine, plump as I look."

And then the two women put their heads together in confidence, and involved themselves for good and all in the peril of shared counsel. The greater part of what they said of themselves, of their neighbors, of the church, need not be reproduced, as it will have little bearing on our story, but whatever was thus imparted, in the warmth of impulse, was most likely repented of in the coolness of calmer judgment. The most secret and sacred confidence on the part of Mrs. Whiteflock related to Peter, her marriage with him and the blessings consequent, in the shape of children, and involved matter for some curious and interesting speculation, if we had time for it. On the part of Mrs. Fairfax, to Margaret, and to Samuel Dale, whose proper name she contemptuously denuded of two syllables. It is not worth while to follow her into minor details, her whole argument being susceptible of a very brief summing up.

Sister Whiteflock had been mistaken as to Samuel's old sweetheart, and the mistake had misled her, and caused her to receive him on terms of familiarity which she bitterly regretted; in short, to accord him a footing in her household, from which she now found it advisable to eject him. He had stolen the heart of her child, a crime for which she could never forgive him. Margaret was his sweetheart, and no other! They were lovers, these witless creatures!

Then Mrs. Whiteflock cried, shame! and the two women held up their hands as though they had never loved and never married. It was disgraceful, it was sinful, but what could be done! The affair would lead to marriage, inevitably, except there were some intervention of providence; this being problematical, a providence must be interposed by human means, and who so fit to take this shape as the mother herself? "Sam" was useful; Mrs. Fairfax had received at his hands many generous favors, she must not break with him altogether. She was a lone woman, and every lone woman must needs have a sort of middle man to do her drudgery. She must manage in some way to retain the man, and dismiss the lover. She did not clearly see her way, and would feel the stronger for the aid and counsel of

her friend. So the two women put their heads together and agreed that Samuel should be ousted, and that all means to this end were righteous. He was homely, homely as a scare-scrow! he was big, big as the side of the house! stupid, stupid as an ox! and they wished he would go back where he came from!

It was a pretty story if Margaret, a mere child, a baby, was to set up a will of her own, and after all her good mother had done for her, too! O, the ingratitude of children!

This conference, thus summed up, lasted several hours; Margaret had felt herself excluded from the session, from the first, and the suppressed tones that came to her now and then, were pregnant with uneasy intimations that set her spirit chafing as she went about her work. At length she paused, folded her arms, and looked out into the rain; looked, naturally enough, in the direction of Mrs. Whiteflock's. All at once the expression of worry and fretfulness vanished from her young face, and a light like the light of enchantment came in its stead. There was secret work to be done, that was evident. She stood still and listened for a moment, and having hastily thrown a shawl over her head, passed out of the house, through the garden, and was in a moment flying along the meadow, her naked feet, like little white wings, just touching the grass as she went.

Peter Whiteflock sat near the open door of his cellar absorbed in his work, which happened to be the repairing of an old clock, when she came and stood before him; he did not see her; his life was all so shadowy, perhaps, that he was not conscious of an added shadow, and kept on turning the old creaking hands, and listening to the striking of the hour with all the rapt admiration with which a lover might listen to the prattle of his mistress. "There she goes! beautiful! splendid! that's right! now try again!" and so, turning the hands, and gazing at the face of the lady on the face of the clock, his enjoyment ran up to ecstasy again and again, as the correct hour was rung out. "There she goes! she's my beauty! that's miraculous! that's sublime!"

Margaret had never been so near this man in all her life till now, and she observed him and all his surroundings with something of superstitious fear mingling with her curiosity, and yet she could not but perceive that both himself

and everything about him was singularly human and humanizing. She was struck, first of all, with his immense bulkiness; she could not make out upon what he was seated, though it was apparently a stool, or chair from which the back had been broken away, for he not only covered, but literally hung down on all sides of it. His cheeks, arms and legs stood out with fatness, and as for his lap, if he had ever had one, it was gone where the eye could not follow it. He was very white and sprout-like, and had certainly the seeming of lamb-like innocence. The implements and tools of his tinkering were scattered all about the room; here a pot of coals, and there chisels, and saws, and augers; and yonder, gimlets, and awls, and chalks and lines, and all the finer professional instruments and articles; while close at his elbow stood a plate of bread and butter, garnished with onions, and a huge pitcher of milk. His face was beardless; his eyes of a pale blue color, large and vague; his hair long and silky, and tumbling in half curl upon his shoulders; his dress a cross between foppishness and carelessness; in his shirt he wore a showy pin, and his fingers were covered with rings.

"I have come," Margaret began timidly, when the clock had struck 'all round from one to twelve. He looked up without a smile, without any token of surprise or pleasure, and then as if something external to himself got him on his legs, he came forward, seeming to be impelled, and not to move of his own volition, for he hesitated, stopped, and as it appeared, resisted the advance with all his might. He got, or was gotten near enough at last to take Margaret's hand, upon which he fell to shuddering, closed his eyes, and after a moment led her to a seat with all imaginable grace, blind though he were. His whole aspect was changed since she first looked upon him; the light of a clear and high intelligence shone in his face, his motions were quiet and easy, and his voice was eminently full and melodious. "You have come," he said, divining her unspoken errand, "about the young man who gave you the ring you have in your bosom." Margaret started and looked at her hand, and yet she knew the ring had never been on her hand; she had feared the eyes of her mother, and had hidden it in her bosom. Samuel had given it in secret, and no one in the world except they two knew that she possessed it. Her

first impulse was to deny the truth. "I don't know what you mean," she said, virtually telling a lie. The manner of the mystic, medium, fortune-teller, or whatever he was, changed from sweetness to severity with a suddenness and completeness that quite transformed him. "Can you expect help from me," he said, "when you come to me with a falsehood on your lips! The ring is in your bosom, and if you deny it, I will leave you to free yourself from the darkness that is gathering about you, as you best can; the love that is anchored in a lie, cannot hold, and I would not make it if I could."

His eyes were closed, but Margaret felt that he, or rather that some intelligence represented by him, was looking through her. She burst into tears, and owned the truth, opening wide her heart, and revealing all its fears, and hopes that kindled fears. At this, her confessor resumed his benign aspect, and "calmed her fears, and she was calm, and told her love with virgin pride."

"But am I loved again?" she said; "that is what I want to know."

"Yes, as tenderly, as devotedly as woman need ask to be loved."

"And will my lover marry me?"

The face of the man grew strangely sad. "It grows very dark about you," he said; "I cannot see all, but I see that you are beloved. There is a white dove nestling on your shoulder, and on its wings in golden letters a name. I cannot see it clearly; now it comes out plainer. S-a-m—Samuel, that is the name, and he who bears that name has a beautiful spirit. I feel an atmosphere of repose, of heaven, about me. Be true, my child, be true to him, whatever interpose; no other man will ever love you as he does."

Margaret laughed. She was not afraid of herself, of whom she had most reason to be afraid; so that she was beloved, why that was all; love would lead to marriage, and marriage was life-long felicity. Margaret, it must be remembered, was very young. In answer to her laughter there came a sigh from the heart of the great creature before her. "There is another picture presented," he said; "I see a church, and a pale young man coming out of it; he approaches you, and the dove flutters and trembles, and now he strikes it with his white hand, and with broken

wing I see it lying on the ground at your feet. You have enemies, my child."

"Who are they?"

"They of your own household; trust the woman this man has taken to be with him; she will befriend you."

"What man do you mean?"

"The man through whom I am communicating with you, — Peter Whiteflock; but he is growing tired, and I cannot use him longer; farewell."

The word was no sooner spoken than Peter trembled and underwent various spasmodic contortions, and slowly unclosing his eyes, was himself again. She's all right, you see! a perfect little beauty, isn't she? fifteen years I've had her, and she's good as new to-day! golden-tongued as a robin. I wouldn't sell her for twice her cost!" He was on his stool again, hanging down all around it, and apostrophizing the old clock, unconscious of any interruption, apparently.

"And what can I do, then?" cried Margaret, bewildered and frightened by his spasms, his reference to enemies, and his strange double character.

"How should I know!" he replied, gazing upon her in blank ignorance. "I reckon you had as good go home; you've heard my queen of singers perform all through, from one to twelve. She beats all the organs holler, don't she!" and he fell to eating bread and butter. And poor little Margaret, not knowing at all whether she had talked with man or spirit, angel or devil, fled across the fields, her white feet bearing her more like wings than before.

That night, Mrs. Fairfax was unusually gay and communicative. She and Mrs. Whiteflock had been talking all the afternoon about the new preacher, the bishop's son, she said. All the church members were to meet at Mrs. Whiteflock's to make cushions and curtains, and piece quilts and hem table-linen, and she knew not what all, toward refurbishing the parsonage, and making it worthy of its new occupants. She named the afternoon that had been set apart for this benevolent purpose, and selected the dress she herself would wear on the occasion. Then, to the surprise and joy of Margaret, she asked her if she would like some new things so as to shine with the rest.

"I have neglected you too much, my dear," she contin-

ued; "I have been to blame, and for the time to come, I mean to do a better part by you. You shall have the slippers you asked for, and whatever more you wish, so it is not unreasonable." And she patted the cheek of the wondering child, with a show of affectionate regard. Mrs. Whiteflock, who really had a tender and motherly heart in her bosom, had said to her friend, during the afternoon's counsel, "if you wish to govern Margaret, you must do it through love; harsh measures will never do. And moreover you cannot keep her a child any more; she is now a woman, and will be so regarded."

"Ah, I will try the experiment!" Mrs. Fairfax had answered. Hence the sweetness.

The result exceeded her hopes; Margaret was taken by storm; the fondness, the generosity were so new, so strange, she knew not what to say. She thought of the stolen interview with Peter, and her heart reproached her; her mother would condemn her conduct, the church would condemn it; perhaps she had been wicked. She had indulged in hard, almost angry feelings toward her mother even while she was meditating such good things toward herself.

"I have something to tell you, mother," she said, falling on her neck and bursting into tears.

She meant to own her love for Samuel; her hand was already on the ring; she meant to confess the stolen interview of the morning, but the mother preferred not to hear what she already knew; as matters stood she could ignore the facts, and, as she believed, manage more adroitly.

"Keep your little secrets, my dear," she said, pushing Margaret from her; "I don't care to know them; what, indeed, could a child like you have to confess?" Then she asked, playfully, whether Margaret had forgotten to tie her garters that morning, or to feed her chickens? or of what other equally great sin she was guilty? laughing as though it were all a very fine jest. So, for the present, the opportunity of honest dealing was lost between them.

Thus disjoined from her mother, as it were, Margaret put down her little secret and remained silent. She could not for the life of her say anything that referred ever so remotely to Samuel. With regard to him she could not assert herself.

Mrs. Fairfax kept up the conversation all the same after Margaret had dropped out of it. She seemed not to be aware of the silence, but answered her own questions, and ran on from this indifferent matter to that, and from one person to another till at last, quite incidentally, she mentioned Samuel. He wasn't quite what a young man should be, she was afraid; he stayed out late of nights, drank, and played cards; she hoped nothing worse, but she didn't know. She was sorry to hear such things; he seemed like a harmless fellow, a clod-hopper, to be sure, but good-natured and well-disposed. This was all nothing to Margaret, of course it was nothing; her little darling was too good, too wise to think of such a poor creature with undue interest. He had himself as good as told her that he didn't believe in the Bible! Wasn't that horrible! She had never breathed it till now, she had been so much shocked by it! A word from her would put him out of the church, but she would forbear. "We must still treat him kindly," she said, "but with a difference, Margaret, with a difference!" It was best for all, she said, that each should keep in his right place. This young fellow, whoever he was — Sister Whiteflock's man — was very ignorant, and didn't really know his place, she supposed, "but we know ours, at any rate," she said, "and must keep in it." She hoped Margaret would not behave haughtily or scornfully, but with condescension instead of consideration, and above all things without compromise of the dignity that should mark the daughter of Mrs. Fairfax! They had, moreover, just now, a reputation to establish with the bishop's son!

This was the subject of her admonition; she did not bring proof of her accusations, but took care so to state them that there should seem to be no doubt of their truth. Indeed, she constantly made it appear that she knew worse things than she told; that she was, in fact, softening and making the best of it all. And she strove to impress upon Margaret, the necessity of great reserve in her intercourse with Samuel, by a variety of insinuations and intimations not here set down.

Poor little Margaret! Every word so softly spoken had pierced like a dagger. She had drawn farther and farther away from her mother until she was quite shrunk into the chimney-corner, where with her head leaned upon the stone

jamb she listened to the heart beating loud and fast under the ring in her bosom, and thought of him who gave it, with twice the accustomed tenderness. Hitherto, she had had him only to love; henceforth he was to defend, to protect, to carefully guard and encourage as well; for that she would stand for him against the world, she did not for a moment doubt.

We do not know much of ourselves until we are tried, not even the best of us, and "Deliver us from temptation," is a prayer that should evermore ascend unto Heaven.

When Margaret closed her chamber door that night, she turned the key, a precaution she was not used to take, and going back directly, tried it again, to make assurance sure. Then reverting to the experience of the morning, she congratulated herself that that was safely locked too, and resolved that, in spite of any momentary impulse to the contrary, she would, for the future, wisely keep her own counsel. Then she took the ring from her bosom, held it up in the light, kissed it again and again, slipped it on her finger, and at last, with her hand beneath her cheek, fell asleep to dream such dreams as women dream when they love much.

CHAPTER III.

A LOVER'S QUARREL.



IT was near the sunset of a lovely day, early in June, that Margaret Fairfax tripped down the steps of the front door, (she experienced special pleasure in tripping over those steps,) and running lightly along the walk, passed through the door-yard gate, which as it swung back behind her, brushed from the rose-bush beside it a shower of fragrant leaves.

Her dress was plain to homeliness, her feet bare, and her bright hair clipped, but not too short to blow about her fore-

head and eyes as she went; and her face was so illuminated that at a glance you would have seen there was some delicious expectation in her bosom. She would certainly have drawn your gaze after her as she went along, perhaps even have entangled your heart among the roses ornamenting the rustic hood she held in her hand; wise men have been thus made captive by simple maidens, before now.

Twilight gathered the last splendor from the hill-tops, and it grew dusky in the borders of the wood, far off the tinkling of sheep-bells sounded pleasant, and near by the whistle of the teamster made bolder music, as, sitting his wheel-horse, so upright, he passed by, seeming not to see the fair vision at the roadside. Light of spirit, and light of step, Margaret walked forward, breaking off, in her cheery exuberance, the tops of the aromatic weeds that fringed her path, and never once looking back where her bashful lover was tracking her by the prints of her bare feet. The world was all before her, as yet; it was not her time to look back. She had reached the terminus of the walk she had proposed to herself, and stood on the slope of the hill beneath a clump of young maples, gazing earnestly down the road, when a cloud of rose leaves came between her eyes and the object she watched for, and turning hastily, almost angrily about, she found herself face to face with Samuel Dale. He saw the look of surprise amounting pretty nearly to displeasure, and was abashed, and doubtless meant it as an apology for intrusion, when he said: "It is not to see you, Miss Margaret, that I am here. I knew your mother would be tired when she came from town, she mostly is you know, and happening this way I thought I would stop and take charge of old Whiteface."

"O, if it's mother you want to see, perhaps you had better walk on; I shan't go any further." But Margaret had no sooner said this than her heart misgave her. Samuel looked so disappointed, so embarrassed, and awkward in his disappointment, that she said she didn't mind if she did go a little further. It was all right now, and as they walked together, half an hour vanished like a moment. There was nothing new or strange to say, to be sure, and yet everything was new, and strangely sweet. Their world was a small world, and their thoughts seldom travelled beyond it; but just now it was wide enough, and each felt

that to be banished from the familiar scene would be to be cast out of Paradise.

Is it true, that when ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise? Samuel had never looked so handsome as he did that evening; he wore a blouse of blue stuff that became him wonderfully, and his broad-brimmed palm-leaf, and the single rose at his button-hole, gave a touch of the jaunty that was to Margaret, at any rate, quite enchanting. He was more at home with himself, too, with Mrs. Fairfax at such a distance, and got through some sentences almost elegantly, as it seemed to his charmed listener. If mother could but hear him! This was her unspoken thought again and again. But that, alas! was not possible; he could not thus have spoken if she had been there, and she could not have heard it if he had. Indeed, I think we must love our friend before we can ever know the best of him.

He told Margaret how much money he had saved, and how much more he would have saved by the end of the year; how many pairs of shoes he had, and in what states of preservation they were, and just what had been the cost of four new shirts that he had purchased. It was a good many to get at once, but he thought he might as well have a full supply while he was about it. He asked Margaret's advice about some quite private and personal matters, and in many ways overstepped the reserve which Mrs. Fairfax had enjoined upon him, yet withal, kept his promise; he did not speak of love.

And in all this talk about the shoes, and the rest of it, he did not appear foolish or small; fond, confidential — nothing more. He was so honest, so great-hearted, so magnanimous in all his feelings, he could not have appeared mean or little in any circumstances. He possessed a certain pride and ambition, too, that in their effect upon his manners amounted almost to dignity. It is not generally conceded, to be sure, that a poor working man may of right hold up his head and lift up his hopes, but concession or no concession, Samuel took such leave, and certainly his aspirations were not very presumptuous; their ultimate stretch probably, on the evening we write of, would have been, to own fifty acres of ground, a house modelled humbly after the parsonage, a garden, with beds of herbs and borders of flowers, and to be able to say in the presence of all the men

and women he knew, "My wife!" and to say it to the young woman standing beside him. He had told this in twenty different ways as they walked together in the twilight; every touch of his hand had thrilled it to her heart, every glance of his eyes had conveyed it to her soul; every low and tremulous tone had intimated it, but Margaret, though she perfectly understood, replied to what he said, and not to the import of what he said; perhaps with womanish perversity, perhaps, in part, with intent to draw him out. And it may be said here, not inaptly, that men, as a general thing, make their courtship with a cautious reservedness that is likely to fall far short of the expectations and desires of women. The lover, when he loves the most, does not give himself freely, spontaneously, entirely; he gives by hints and intimations, and compliments, and extravagant praises and promises, so that even in marriage, sometimes, the woman only knows that she has given herself, having taken a husband solely on trust. Your lover may protest over and over, my dear young lady, that he is ready to die for you, but that is by no means equivalent to saying simply that he is willing to live for you. Not at all.

When a woman really loves, she cannot find words sweet enough, and generous enough, to say what she would. She cannot repeat often enough the complete renunciation of herself. She longs to unfold her most secret soul, and to pour out all her heart, and holds the opportunity to do so as the highest privilege of her life. When such opportunity is withheld, therefore, is it any marvel if she should be sometimes grieved, hurt, almost to vexation.

It is unsatisfactory to have a stone given us when we ask for bread, and though Margaret had not been thus hardly treated, she had certainly failed to receive the full, fresh loaf she hoped for, and had reason to expect. Samuel was excusable, but how should Margaret know of the obligation to silence he was under. She did not dream of it, but feeling the silence on his part to be an offence, took a colder and more formal tone, and, at length fell to silence herself, altogether. Samuel saw the cloud on her brow, and strove by various little arts to win back the vanished radiance; he gathered the blooming bunches of the iron-weed that grew by the way, and playfully scattered them over her head, until her hair and shoulders shone with them, until all her

bosom was full of them. She did not lift her hand to brush them away; she did not lift her eyelid, did not smile, nor speak; and when at last he said: "What is the matter with you, Margaret?" She answered, "Nothing." And when he said in lower, tenderer tones, "Won't my dear Daisy tell her clumsy Sam, her own clumsy Sam, that ought to know of his own head, but don't?" She said she didn't know who his Daisy was, and that for her part she hadn't any Sam, that she knew of.

He brushed the flowers softly from her hair as he answered, "You don't want any Sam; that is what you meant, I reckon."

What could Margaret do? She could not say what she would, and she would not say what she could; therefore she pouted and said nothing, while her admirer strewed his flowers along the ground as they walked, looking upon her now and then as the moth is supposed to look upon the star. Her petulance was poetry, her chilliest words were charming to him, and somehow, he knew not how, he was to blame. When his dull brain should come to know in what he had offended, it would all be right again.

"I have got a new name for you," he said, looking straight at Margaret, and speaking with make-believe animation. She did not inquire what it was, and he went on — "Yes, I have got a new name, since you don't like Daisy; I am going to call you my Sensitive Plant!"

"Call me what you please," Margaret answered, and she added with cruel bitterness, "it's no difference to me, sir, what you call me!"

"O Margaret! O my Daisy! My sweet Daisy! What have I done to vex you? What can I do to please you?"

"If I must tell you what to say, there is but a poor chance of your pleasing me, I should think! As I told you before, say and do what you please, it's nothing to me."

"God-a-mercy! God-a-mercy on me, then! I knowed I was hopin' too much; I knowed it all the time; I knowed I couldn't be nothin' to the like o' you! I knowed the shader would turn into night soon or late; it's fell sooner 'an I thought, that's all. I was like a weed that had growed in your garden, and that the sun shone on for awhile because it shines on everythin'; it is not your fault, little Daisy, oh, no! don't think I'm a-blamin' you; I couldn't blame you for

anythin', not if you tore my heart-strings all to pieces; so you only found music in their breakin', that would be all I'd ask."

He grew pale with the passion that was in him, and the moisture gathered to his eyes as he bent them on the ground over which, to divert his emotion, he commenced strewing the flowers again.

Margaret softened a little; it went to her pity, if not to her love, to see the strong man thus moved. She put her hand below his and received the falling flowers, but said nothing. Samuel did not touch the hand, nor seek to touch it, as he might have done, but steadying up his courage with all his might, said: "There is but one thing for me to do, Margaret, — Miss Margaret, I mean, — I mustn't see you any more, I must go away."

"Not on my account, I'm sure I wouldn't be the means of sending you away, not for the world!" Margaret spoke playfully, at the same time taking his hand in both hers, as if to put in it the blossoms she had saved.

"They are blessed now," he said, "my poor, homely blossoms!" and he kissed them, and put them carefully away; but he did not retain the hand; nor seek to retain it; he did not say, as Margaret had perhaps expected, "you don't love me, my darling; all my heart is yours, and to keep it from breaking I must needs go out of your sight." He could not say this, as the reader knows, but if he could have said it, or anything like it, the shadow that came between them, the night that fell upon them, might have been averted. The pride of the girl was touched now, but her fears were touched too, and she humbled her pride and asked him again why he would go away, adding, with a manner between seriousness and jest, and which might have been either, "I demand to know, I have a right to know!"

"My Daisy, my darlin' Daisy!" he laid his rough, sinewy hand lightly on her bright, young head, "I wish I could tell you all, but I don't dare to, I am under a sacred promise." What further he would have said, if anything was prevented by the angry exclamation of Margaret.

"A sacred promise to be sure!" she cried, "then all I have heard is true; I was blind and crazy not to believe it at once; I'm sure, if you hold any promise sacred, it is more than could have been expected; keep it by all means! and I wish you much joy of your sweetheart, into the bargain!"

"You are crueller than you need to be, crueller than you would be, if you knew all," Samuel answered, "but I must keep my promise; I never broke my sacred promise yet, and I mustn't begin now."

"Who wants you to begin? I'd like to know!"

"Nobody, without it's my own heart; but if I begun by bein' false to one, how could I be true to another? I must keep my promise, but it doesn't break it to say that I haven't got a sweetheart anywhere."

"That's a likely story! why, then, are you going away?"

"I don't know how to make it right, Miss Margaret; I begun by bein' wrong; I oughtn't to 'a' made the promise, but as I did, I must take the consequences, I reckon."

There was a good deal more between them; talk about things rather than directly of them, ending, on the part of Margaret, with reference to the dark accusations that were current against him.

"I don't know what you've heard against me," Samuel answered sadly, "but there's a mighty sight might be told if the truth was all knowed; I ain't no saint, O no! I'm fur enough from that, but the worst thing I ever done I wouldn't be ashamed to tell you; why should I be? Don't I confess my sins every night in my prayers, before I go to bed, and ask to be forgiven as I forgive them that harm me?" He broke quite down at this point, and turning away his face applied himself assiduously to pulling their flowery tops from the iron-weeds. Margaret remained silent, intent only, as it seemed, upon catching the first glimpse of her mother; and, at last, having got the mastery of himself, Samuel said, "I wish it was all over, and that I was back agin."

"Back where! with your sweetheart? and what do you wish was over?"

"I told you I had no sweetheart, but if you don't believe me, I can't make you. I wish I was back among the green hills I came from, and with my dear old mother. She loves me any how, and I wish the pain of this partin' was over; that's what I meant"

"The pain of parting, to be sure! with whom, I wonder!" And Margaret laughed scornfully.

Samuel was offended. "Laugh if you want to," he said, "rememberin' it will lighten my sufferings." Margaret laughed again, repeating the word sufferings several times,

and then she said sarcastically. "I'm sure I pity you, from my heart."

"O, you're very good, and I'm sure I'm much obleeged to you for your condescension," Samuel replied, still further offended. He then said there were some folks in the world besides his mother, who believed in him, yet.

Margaret said she had heard as much; he drew himself up at this, and as if the time were becoming tedious, said he wished her mother would come.

"I wish so too," replied Margaret, repeating the lie he had uttered, with what seemed very earnest sincerity, and she added directly, "You needn't wait for her, I'm sure mother and I can take care of ourselves!"

"I know it, Miss Margaret," he answered, half sadly, half bitterly. "I a'most wish it wasn't so, for then I might hope to be of some use to you; but now — but now —." There was a last chance for some relenting on the part of Margaret, but she still bore herself coldly and proudly. She could afford indifference just then; the roses of sixteen were bright in her cheeks, and had not her mother the friendship of the bishop's son? and was she not now gone to town to buy her a new dress and earrings, and slippers, and ever so many things besides! Ah, Samuel, there was but a sorry chance for you just then.

In social position, and prospective future, they were about equal, these young people, just now, but in moral nature and in intellectual capacity there was a large difference in favor of the man, though the young woman, to the casual observer would have seemed to have the advantage. Women have a natural artfulness, so to speak, that often stands them in the stead of culture, and not only this, but conceals with its perfect gilding the poverty of heart and spirit that is beneath. Margaret possessed this questionable advantage, and construed it into superiority, perhaps even at the best of times, and she certainly did so now that her eyes were obscured with none of the mists of tender feeling.

She felt that she condescended a little in permitting herself to be loved by Samuel, and was, therefore, the more indignant at his reticence.

"I am sorry you wish us harm," she said, affecting not to understand his remark about their independence, "but I don't suppose we'll go to the poor-house just because you would like to have it so."

"I see you're determined not to understand anything I say," replied Samuel, in sorrow, rather than anger, "so it ain't worth a-while for me to waste more words. I'll just wait a bit longer, and then if Mrs. Fairfax don't come home I'll go about my own affairs."

"It's a pity if I can't be as independent as he," thought Margaret, "I won't be the one to be left, not I." And telling him that if he was going about his own affairs, so that he might go away from her, she would save him the trouble, she turned from him proudly, and walked slowly in the direction of home, hoping, it is not unlikely, that he would call her back.

He would gladly have done so, but he was not without his share of pride too; then he indulged the hope that she would return of her own free will when she should hear the market-cart rattling in the distance. Both were disappointed, for the sake of a foolish and wrong feeling, bred out of almost nothing, nursed into bitter uneasiness, wilfully and perversely, on the part of one of them, certainly, and entailing upon both miserable days and nights that might as well have been avoided, might as well have been blessed days and nights.

Strange, that the course of true love never should run smooth. Margaret was not yet out of sight when the market-cart came rattling over the next hill, more noisily than Samuel could have hoped, but the haughty girl did not so much as turn her head. She knew that Samuel loved her, and knew that she was making him wretched, knew that she was not only making herself wretched for the time, but moreover, laying up sorrow for the time to come. Do you ask me why she did this? pray you, ask your own heart, not me.

When Mrs. Fairfax found Samuel waiting for her, and alone, she accosted him with great good humor; "Get right up beside me," she said, "and drive me home; my poor arms ache with the pulling of old Whiteface upon the bit. It was so good of you, I am sure, and where is Margaret? How strange she isn't with you!"

Of course Samuel didn't know where Margaret was, and this ignorance still further increased the cordiality of the patroness, and as they drove forward she related all the experiences of the day. She told him how she had lost a

linch-pin, and how a strange gentleman had taken one from his gig, and given her; and then she enumerated all the things she had bought, and the price she had paid for each article, and asked Samuel to sum up the entire amount, both because she was proud of the largeness of the sum spent, and for the reason that he would naturally feel himself farther removed from her daughter, by a knowledge of her pinchbeck earrings, and prunella slippers. She did not miscalculate. Samuel had never in his life, felt so poor, so hurt, as when carrying his arms full of parcels and boxes and bundles, he laid them down in the lap of Margaret, who received them without a smile. He would not go away without a reconciliation, she felt sure of that, presuming upon his love, and forgetting that love will sometimes bear less than hate. The best table-cloth was laid, and all the tea things arranged with unusual care, she peeping through the curtains now and then to see him as he went about the evening chores, his palm-leaf hat a little one side and his blue blouse all unbuttoned to the wind.

Mrs. Fairfax, when she accepted his proffered services, did not invite him to remain and drink tea with them, as she used to do,—this was one of the differences she had made,—she was willing to receive as much as ever, but when it came to giving, she was chary. She estimated, indeed, the worth of every kind word, and each particular smile, throwing in more or less sweetness, as the case required.

Her forms of address indicated the degree of the favor she was angling for—"Samuel" was for her most independent moods, or, perhaps it were better said, for her least dependent occasions, inasmuch as she was never independent. She sucked up benefits as the sponge sucks water, and was always on the alert. "Sam" served for occasions a little more than ordinary, but not extraordinary; "dear Sam," or "Sam, you handsome rascal!" was brought into requisition in exigent cases—for instance—"Samuel, would it trouble you too much, when you go to the village this evening, to see the butcher for me?" And again, "Sam, do you know any good fellow that would spade my garden for me some leisure morning? If you do, see that he does it, will you? and when my ship comes in, he shall be remembered!" or, "Sam, my dear fellow, really you are so good, I don't mind asking you," and then it would come out that

she wanted some favor she should have blushed to receive, let alone ask for.

One day she said to him, "Sam, dear, if you find any nice strawberries in the meadow, would you mind gathering a bowl of them for me?"

Of course Samuel wouldn't mind, and of course she got the strawberries — a beautiful basket of them, all blushing among dewy leaves. "Now, my Saint Samuel," she said, when she received them, "will you oblige me once more, just for the love I bear you?"

"Certainly," what could he say otherwise, and then she asked him to leave the strawberries at the parsonage, as a little present from Mrs. Fairfax and daughter to the bishop's son! This was the unkindest cut of all. Samuel had disliked the bishop's son by anticipation before he ever saw him, and had subsequently found no reason to change his mind. Nevertheless he sat astride the fence and whistled to the moon that evening, while the bishop's son said grace over a silver bowl of strawberries.

It is a pity that Mrs. Fairfax had not held it beneath her thus to sell her smiles, and let us hope with what confidence we may, that there are few, if any women, who in any degree resemble her. "No, dear," she said when the tea things were all on the table. "I really believe I forgot to ask Samuel to sup with us; but he has already eaten, I dare say, such persons have early hours, you know!" So they sat down together, but to Margaret all the pleasure of the time was gone. The new dress, the prunella slippers, the earrings, all would not do. She tried in vain to seem gay, the words came stammeringly, and then not at all, and finally when the mother made some slighting remark about Samuel she burst into tears. She didn't know what was the matter she said in answer to her mother's inquiry. She had a little headache, but nothing had happened to make her sad, nothing in the world! Then she went away from the table, and seating herself on the low doorstep, looked out into the night, not to watch the soft rising moon, nor to see the twinkling of the village lights; unconsciously to herself almost, she hoped to see Samuel still lingering about the well, or in the garden. She saw the slow sailing of the night-hawk, and the blind flitting of the bat. She saw the late workmen plodding home, and the cows lying down in

the pasture, and the shadows deepening over all, but she saw not whom she hoped to see.

Mrs. Fairfax sought by various little devices that would have been kind if they had not been so artful, to interest and amuse the sad girl. She had often felt just so herself when there was nothing at the bottom of it that she knew of, and she bustled about, and as she put away the supper things, talked of indifferent matters, answering her own questions the while, and making believe that no suspicion of the truth had come near her; but when Margaret would not be pacified, she said at last, pettishly, "I don't wonder you are down-hearted! any body would be down-hearted, if they had been alone all day as you have been, or what is worse, had seen only that curious creature, Samuel; really, my strong nerves are shocked by him sometimes! I suppose he waited to-night to be especially invited to come in! Well, if he waits for me to coax him he'll wait a good while, I dislike him more and more every day; he is so big, and so awkward!" This was not the way Margaret was to be pacified. She could blame Samuel herself, but she could not patiently hear another blame him, and that other, her mother, who owed him so much gratitude. She said something half inaudibly to the effect that Samuel could live without some folks as well as some folks could live without him, and so, sullen, as well as sad, went away to her chamber, where, with her eyes hidden on her arm, she at last fell asleep, sighing and sobbing even in her dream. What were all the new things to her now? almost as nothing, but if she could have known they were designed to buy her away from Samuel, they would have been less than nothing; as it was, she had them to set against his indifference, and thus she made for herself some cold comfort.

She was sorry for what she had done, and yet she resolved she would not take a single step to undo it. She was foolish, but who of us all has not been foolish? For my part, I believe women stand in their own light more wilfully and persistently than do men—they never will, once for all, bury the hatchet, and there let it lie and rust out unused; no, they must needs haunt about the old ground, and every now and then, as chance occurs, throw out dark hints and intimations of what they might, could, would or should do, and at last, in some ill-starred moment, up comes the cher-

ished weapon, and then such thrusts and blows right and left! Stand from under my good man, and the Lord have mercy on your soul!

At such a time you said this! at such another you said that! here you did thus, you hard-hearted, ungrateful wretch! yes you did, too! doesn't my mother know it all? And there you did so—you know it, very well! And so, one after another, the old wounds are hewed open, and ache and bleed afresh—and to what end? Why, to no good end. When the little slight or the little quarrel is over, for goodness' sake, for righteousness' sake, let it go, and never by sign nor the shadow of a sign suffer it to be supposed that you have any remembrance of it. Constant dropping you know—well, constant fretting upon the heart will wear out love. Cultivate the habit of not only making the best of the best, but also of making the best of the worst—do not look too far away for happiness, nor hope too much,—sufficient for the day are its blessings, if we are diligent to gather them up.

When the morning light streamed through the window and across Margaret's pillow, the fear and despondency of the previous night vanished like a shadow, she was so conscious of possessing the love of Samuel that she could not believe he would long remain away from her, and by anticipation began almost to enjoy the triumph which she felt so sure of achieving. She did not believe he in the least designed to go away, but even supposing he had such thoughts, he would come to see her before putting them in execution, and if he once sees me, she said, let him go if he can! And having taken this for granted, her thoughts ran forward and pictured, after a fashion highly satisfactory to herself, all the details of the interview; how Samuel should first relieve her of all blame and afterwards own himself to blame, very much to blame—wrong, altogether in the wrong—herself quite right, and to be asked forgiveness of, which, after receiving many promises and protestations, she would grant. She meant that it should all be right in the end, more right than it had ever been, and she planned a thousand generous plans of this and that—she would not be a jealous and exacting mistress any more, not she, but the truest and tenderest of little maids that ever waited on a master's will.

In all this she reckoned without her Samuel, poor child;

he had his pride as well as she, and a much wiser and more enduring pride. If he had felt himself the superior person, if he had felt himself in any way the equal of his captor, which in his sweet humility he did not, he might not have stood so coldly out, but he was conscious of all his clumsy ways, and never without a suspicion that she was conscious of them too; it seemed, therefore, as though there were nothing for him to do but fall back upon his pride. He remembered her bitter taunts, not with any feelings of resentment, and not as attaching any blame to her, some how, and some way, she was justified; it was her mother, it was idle gossip, it was the bishop's son! And this, least of all things, was, perhaps, the most extravagant extenuation he could have made for his mistress. In the first place, she had never so much as spoken to Mr. Lightwait, that he knew of, and in the second, she had no admiration for him, that he knew of. He put her from his mind as much as he could, and evening after evening, descended to the workshop in the cellar, when the day's toil was done, and by the light of Peter's tallow candle read aloud from the Bible, or from the Methodist hymn-book, and sometimes sung with all his soul, devoutly grateful that his divine Lord had been once the meekest and lowliest of men, and would not despise even the like of him. Thus, there grew up between them a friendship that became confidential in the end. And evening after evening, as Samuel sat thus, reading and singing, and talking of things unseen, Margaret walked in the lane with a half scornful smile on her face, and evening after evening the rosy twilight fell into gray, and the gray slowly and soberly deepened to black, and he did not come — he that she hoped to see.

Night after night she went to sleep with bitter tears in her eyes, and morning after morning the embers of hope kindled themselves and blazed again, for there is no end of the devices with which we delude ourselves.

Meantime, the "fashionable dressmaker" of the village was in requisition, and the cutting and shaping, and sewing and fitting, went on, and the young girl could not but be diverted in some sort by these processes; to stand up before the glass and be laced up and pinned down, and called on to decide the effect of this ribbon and that frill, was an exciting novelty to her, whose simple gowns had always till now been more simply fashioned.

When he sees me in all these fine things, she thought, as she turned the little hat on her hand, gay amber ribbons and blue flowers, and with admiring eyes upon me besides his, he will repent of all this cruel coldness. And then she resolved that she would not act proudly toward him in consequence of all her finery, but on the contrary would take special pains so show him that she was quite independent of her new honors. Since she had first seen him, so many days had not elapsed without a meeting between them, yet Mrs. Fairfax passed it along without any notice whatever; it happened that she had no especial need of Samuel during these days.

They had met often, as the reader knows, previously to the ill-starred evening, but not alone, and it is not unlikely that, with all their hearts, both had been long desiring the very interview which they had turned to such bad account, why, neither of them could tell; it was with no premeditation, surely, and yet it fell out.

Mrs. Fairfax passed it along, but she was not unobservant. It is all going just as I would have it, she thought, but to strengthen her hopes she constantly reminded Margaret that she was placed under heavy obligations by these new favors; "her mother's will is going to be hers for the future," she would say to the dressmaker with playful vivacity; "I see that plain enough in all these pretty fringes and tassels and cords, and everything! O, she is going to be the best and dutifulest young lady in all the world!" It was much to admit that Margaret was a *young lady*, even in this playful manner, and was of itself expected to go a great way.

"I expect great things of her to pay for it all, to be sure!" Then she would make a picture of Margaret in her finery shining down all the village girls, and ending with, "Who knows but she is going to marry the bishop's son, yet?" Then fluttering the new hat with all its flowers and ribbons before her, she would bow before it as if to Mrs. Lightwait. By these means she hoped to expel from the mind of Margaret humbler thoughts and fancies, but she had no intention of making over the great man thus lightly. She felt that she had a preëmption right in him, some how; and with reference to appearing well in his eyes, she employed herself "in the vast dead and middle of the night" in studying effects of color and combinations of material upon her own

toilet, remembering Margaret only as a something that was to set herself off—an ornament to be carried in her hand, as it were.

Sunday morning dawned at last, in promise of the loveliest of days. Margaret was astir by times. She would of a surety meet Samuel at church; he would shake hands with her; perhaps walk part of the way home with her, and all would be made up! The milking was concluded before the birds were well out of the bushes, and the breakfast-cups done with, and shining along the dresser half an hour sooner than common. The sacred psalm she was trying over would run to a gay tune in spite of herself, as she flitted about, putting by needles and thread, and removing from shelf and table the shows of work-day labor and care, and in their stead substituting the Bible, the hymn-book, the pitcher of flowers, thereby imparting to all the house the air of solemn Sabbath serenity which it was used to have, but which for herself, she could not that day feel. The hour of her triumph was almost come, so she believed in her heart; her hand had never been so cunning; whatever she touched adjusted itself to her will, so that all the morning chores were completed while the dew yet lay fresh along the grass.

How charming she looked in her little chamber with its sandwhite floor, and simple furniture, all set off with garniture of her own maidenly invention; here some pretty device of drapery, there a bowl of bright-colored pebbles, or a nest full of tiny speckled eggs. Something everywhere that told of a young girl's innocent thoughts and dreams. Above the looking-glass, which was not much bigger than one's hand, hung the scarlet wing of a wild bird, and beneath it, a curiously-curved ram's horn, and these, as might be guessed, were the gifts of Samuel. From the drawer of the bureau peeped the blue fringes of the comforter she was secretly knitting for him against the far-away Christmas time, and on the table beside the Testament, lay a bunch of withered daisies, gathered by the beloved hand. It was all so sweet, so still, so full of holy associations, the boldest sunbeam might scarcely dare look in, when Margaret, drawing the white curtain across the small window, untied the cape modestly fastened at the throat, and loosening the band at the waist, went pattering about the floor with bare feet, and hair all tumbled about her dimpled shoulders and arms. All the

counterpane was covered with her rustic finery — the embroidered sleeve, the ruffled hem, the handkerchief ironed to small square folds, the snow-white stockings, the blue belt, the fan of pheasant's feathers, tied with ribbons to match the belt, the shawl, the parasol, and oh, triumph of art! the new dress. Shall Samuel look upon all these new things unmoved? If the vanity in her little heart answered, No, let us forgive her.

"Come, Margaret!" calls the mother from the foot of the stairs. And yet again: "Come, Margaret!" And this time she adds that the church bell is ringing.

Margaret answers, "Yes, mother, in a moment!" but she is not nearly ready, though she has been in her chamber so long, getting ready. She was well enough pleased with herself, but would she please Samuel?

At last she could delay no longer, and with a parting glance in the looking-glass, partly satisfactory and partly not, she descended, fluttering and blushing and trembling, almost. Mrs. Fairfax stood still with admiration; for once she was proud of her daughter, or, more correctly speaking, she was proud of her daughter's clothes.

"The folks will think I have got a young lady from town with me," she said, and they set out together, talking little by the way, each being preoccupied; the mother, with ambitious hopes and schemes; Margaret, with Samuel. What if he should not be at church! What if he should not speak to her! And what if she should fall to crying in the face of all the congregation! Then she would chide her heart for its foolish fancies; he would be there, of course he would be there, the first to seek her, and so humbly penitent! He might not walk home with her, but he would come in the evening, and they would sit in the moonlight together once more, and she would say this and that, and so she planned all her speech, and all her conduct. She would not wear her fine things; she would wear the string of black beads, tied with the blue ribbon with which he had played so often, and the muslin dress with the brown speck, that would be sure to please; he would call her Daisy, and everything would be as it used to be.

Perhaps he had been watching for her, and would overtake her before she reached the meeting-house; her heart was a-tremble with sweet hopes; every approaching foot-

step was his, and not a shadow crossed her path, and not a voice reached her ear but fancy made a picture of him; eagerness to serve her, showing through his modesty, and the grace of charm, shining over his clumsiness. They reached the meeting-house gate, and she had not yet seen him except in fancy; he was gone into the church before her, and one opportunity was lost. She blamed herself for being late, and was almost sorry she had waited to array herself in her new things. She felt misgivings lest she might not look well in his eyes, and lest he might think she desired to be noticed. She could hardly lift her eyes as she walked behind her mother down the aisle; his eyes were upon her, she was sure, and now that she was so near him, her fears got the better of her hopes. Not till long after she was seated could she lift her face toward the pulpit where the preacher was already reading the hymn, but she got courage at last, and looked up? Was it fancy? or had those deep, far-looking eyes singled her from the whole congregation? Unconsciously her eyelids fell, and she fluttered all over like a bird when danger approaches. She was ashamed of the sensation; it was not likely Mr. Lightwait had noticed her at all, but if he had, it was her too worldly dress that had attracted him. It was not long, however, that she thought of him, for with the first step that crossed the threshold her thoughts reverted to Samuel. With every click of the gate latch her heart would start up, and by the time the advancing shadow touched the door-sill, the red spot in her cheek would have widened all over her face, but when the disappointing reality followed the shadow, the heart would sink back, and the bright flush fade away.

She did not hear the sermon. She did not even hear the prayer, and when the closing hymn was read, she could not find the place, and remained turning the leaves of the book after the singing began. Again she lifted her face, and Mr. Lightwait, who was unmistakably observing her this time, re-announced the number of the hymn. The sensation she had previously experienced repeated itself at this, and she came near dropping the book from her hand. She was mortified beyond measure, though not a soul could be aware of her emotion. It was inexplicable to herself, strange, painful. Father Goodman might have looked at her in censure, or in praise; any way he would, and she would not have fluttered

like a frightened bird, nor would she have come near dropping her book.

It was the custom of the congregation, during the singing of the last hymn, to turn from the pulpit and facing the choir; but though Margaret turned with the rest she could not look up. Samuel was used to sing in the choir. She had not distinguished his voice, but that might be owing to her confusion; he was surely there, for he never failed of being at church—never failed singing with all his soul. And it was always a pleasure to her to hear his voice ring out with the best of them. Perhaps he was not singing with his accustomed spirit that day, but try as she would to stay up her courage, the fear that he was not in the meeting-house, and that some evil had befallen him—for love is strangely apprehensive for the beloved—took possession of her; a chilly dampness crept over her from head to foot, a blindness that was dizzy veiled her sight, and she fell, rather than sank, to her seat.

If she had been the object of curious attention before, she was doubly so now, and as no one could possibly guess the truth, her conduct met an interpretation unfortunate to herself. She wished to make herself conspicuous because of her new things, said the young folks, and some of the old folks nodded and smiled; so true is it that some persons, at least, get something out of the misfortunes of others that is not displeasing to themselves. "We will not humor the vanity of the young butterfly by giving her any attention," seemed to be the tacit understanding, and one and another passed by, after the benediction had been pronounced, with a formal salutation to Mrs. Fairfax, but no word for Margaret; there she was trembling behind her mother's ampler skirts, unnoticed, unseen, apparently, wishing to be anywhere, rather than there, anywhere, so that she might hide her head. The slight was specially marked, for it was the custom of the time and place for the congregation to linger after the close of the services for the purpose of shaking hands with the preacher, and afterward with one another; to exchange kind hopes and wishes, inquire after the old grandmother and the lame boy left at home, and to make little criticisms and comments on the sermon and the singing; possibly to whisper a word about the last marriage, or an expected event of great interest, generally nameless.

Indeed it would have been quite in order for those persons knowing her familiarly, to have said to Margaret how pretty and becoming were her new dress and hat, but no such pleasant and harmless flattery greeted her. One young woman with a hat especially old-fashioned took occasion to remark to her that she had never seen her looking so badly; maybe it was partly owing to the horrid color of her ribbons! If she moved, she wished to be noticed; if she shrank back, it was coldness, it was pride — anything but modesty and bashful confusion, when, poor child, it was only through her sufferings that she thought of herself at all. What would she not have given now to have that last miserable evening with Samuel to live over again! Perhaps he had gone away in very truth, and she was never to see him more, however long she might live! Perhaps he was sick — dying, and she not near to ask his forgiveness; these, and all the other tormenting fancies that love is so cunning to devise, crowded into her brain and made her heart sick. She dragged so heavily on the arm of her mother as they went down the aisle that she turned and spoke sharply to her. "My dear Sister Fairfax, allow me? I see your little daughter is sick and suffering." And Mr. Lightwait took the hand that hung dejected and cold by Margaret's side and drew it through his arm. Half a dozen women were eager now to give her water, to fan her, to do anything, but that first touch of the young clergyman's hand had brought her quite to herself. "Thank you," she said, drawing away from him, "I am better now."

Would she not be carried to the parsonage, and rest there for a few minutes, at least? She required some sort of cordial, or restorative, and Mr. Lightwait would be only too happy to be of any service; he had, in fact, always the tenderest interest in the lambs of his flock. He addressed himself to Mrs. Fairfax rather than to Margaret, and took occasion to speak of the Sunday-school, and of the unnecessary labor which Margaret was accustomed to impose upon herself there. He did not say, "Margaret," nor "your daughter," at this point, but touching her cheek softly with his white fingers, called her "our little saint." He had not himself been in the Sunday-school, to be sure, but he knew what passed there; his sister, a much more competent person in executive matters, relieved him of many unprofitable

duties, and it was from her he had learned about Margaret's over-conscientiousness. "If our little saint insists too much on martyrdom we will have her arrested" — (here he took her hand and pressed it) — "and throw her into prison with Peter Whiteflock and his spirits, perhaps. Have you ever seen Brother Peter, darling?"

"Oh, Brother Lightwait, you don't think it's possible that queer man has intercourse with spirits?"

"I think, madam, — Sister Fairfax, I would say, that 'there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy.'"

"But you can't think he talks with spirits, that odd creature?"

"Do you suppose, Sister Fairfax," he turned and looked upon her more closely than he had yet done, and added in a changed tone, "that we are going to have prosperity in our Zion here?"

There Mrs. Fairfax was quite at home, and ran on telling him all about Father Goodman, and the souls that were added to the church during his charge, and all about the backsliders, and class-meetings and love-feasts; and all about a great many incidents and accidents connected with the church, to which he seemed to listen attentively, but he asked no questions and made no audible responses, all the while, against her will, retaining the hand of Margaret.

"And now you must go in," he said, when they had reached the gate of the parsonage, putting his arm about her, and with a gentle force compelling obedience.

"No!" Margaret said she was sick, and would prefer to go home. "I know it, my precious lamb, you are very sick, and that is the reason you cannot be suffered to have your own way; when I am sick, you shall rule me, my dear, but not now."

She was at the door, inside the door, all against her will. "There, Kate, wheel the sofa this way." "A pillow, quick!" "Now a glass of wine!" "None of your common, everyday stuff!" (he tossed what she had brought, from the window) — "The best, the best!" "There, darling, all, you must swallow it all!" And Margaret drank as much as she could of the wine, and, utterly overpowered with the strangeness and conflicting character of her emotions, sank back in the corner of the sofa, quite regardless of the fresh flowers

and ribbons of her hat, and covering her face with her hands, cried like a little child.

"Dear me!" cries Kate Lightwait, "what shall we do! fetch the doctor?"

"Fetch your good sense, good sister, and get yourself out of the room. She smothers you, my poor child, doesn't she, with all her shawls and things? There, now you breathe again. Sister Fairfax, will you please find Kate's maid, and ask her for smelling salts?" He was alone with Margaret now. "I am going to be nurse and physician, my darling, as well as priest." He was stooping over her, untying the ribbons that fastened her hat. He was longer doing this than need were, and his face came nearer Margaret's than need were, and twice, or thrice, his hands unconsciously, or by accident it might have been, dropped upon her neck.

"I am too troublesome," said Margaret, and she untied the ribbons at once; but the flushed cheek and something in the tone made it almost as though she had said, "You are too troublesome!" and the little flirt, so quickly effective, which she had given to the lately obstinate strings was of itself a reproof.

"Really, quite a stroke of genius, my child!" and then he apologized for his own awkwardness with so sweet a seriousness, it would have been impossible not to receive it all in good faith.

Now he adjusted her pillow, and now he wrapt the little silken shawl about her shoulders, addressing her sometimes as "my darling," sometimes as "my child," and gliding from this to that after a method that would have been gay and worldly, but for the subduing grace, the religious gloom, so to speak, that tinged it all with a sort of sad sanctity.

His tones, low and softly modulated, lulled and soothed the perturbed heart, even when there was no continuity and no purpose in what he said; a sweet silver jangle of sounds, such as the careless touches of a cunning hand draw forth from a fine instrument.

Margaret, young, simple-hearted and simple-minded, could not begin to comprehend the man; she was puzzled, awed, afraid, and withal, fascinated. It would, indeed, have puzzled a wiser head than hers to tell from his words or his manner whether he were lover, friend, father, or spiritual father; he seemed not so much each by turns, as all in one.

The personality of the man was to Margaret, who had

never seen any likeness of him, wonderfully impressive; his hands were perfection, his complexion pale, sicklied, as it were, with the cast of thought, his eyes of a deep, unfathomable blue, and his hair, in its beauty and abundance, a glorious wonder. He wore no beard — not a bit, and his long wavy locks dropped about his forehead, hung full and flowing down his neck, and sometimes fell over his face like the tresses of a woman. The color was not very definite; one would say brown shading to gold, another gold shading to brown. But after all, perhaps the charm of the man was chiefly in his smile, — clear and bright as a sunbeam, full of wisdom, full of love, sweet as sweet can be, sedate, almost sad. As often as this beamed upon Margaret, her heart trembled toward it, all against her will.

It was a fine pleasure to be tended so carefully by those exquisite hands; it was as if the grand proprietor had come down to the little maid of the lodge. Everything was at her service; the table sparkled with wine cups and silver plate, essence bottles and cordials, and yet she had never in all her life been so thoroughly uneasy as now, in her sudden elevation. She feared to touch the tiny glass lest she should crush it; she did not know how to unscrew the golden stopper of the smelling-bottle, and Kate's great fan, flashing and gleaming with ivory and pearl, made her own, with its slender blue ribbon, seem poor indeed. The deep pile of the carpet under her feet confused her; her finery seemed rustic, and its reflection in the large mirror put her to shame. It was all the strong master could do to manage this maid of the lodge. Now he had her hands, chafing them, now her little feet, now he petted, and now scolded, now smiled, and now frowned, and yet he all the while perfectly understood that his efforts were misdirected, and consequently must be unavailing, for he said in a whisper, on the re-appearance of Kate. "Cut her lace, Charmian, come," and so went out of the room.

The dressmaker's professional pride had been more at fault than the girl's vanity, but the faintness and hysterics would not have ensued, probably, but for the unusual flutterings and swellings of the overcharged heart. What trifles underlie great events, sometimes.

"The wheel is shunted from the tram, just an inch this way or that, but try to get back again!" * * *

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BISHOP'S SON.



IF tormenting fancies came to Margaret, when she missed Samuel at church, with what an accession of tormenting power did they come when she lay on her own bed, tossing to and fro, night after night. She could not speak of him, and her mother would not; she, simple soul, being completely submerged by the civilities of the bishop's son.

What could they do to show their gratitude for such condescension! She had nothing in her poor house worthy his acceptance; more was the pity; Margaret was provokingly insensible of the honor that had been done her. Couldn't she distinguish a gentleman from a clodhopper?

Every stab like this set Margaret's heart bleeding, but she said nothing; she only kept apart, and moped and mourned, and fed her fears till they grew strong and began to suck the life out of her. In the middle of the night she would get up and put the ring on her finger, and live over in memory the moment when, with its first shining on her hand, it delighted all her being; she would take down from the wall the bird's wing of scarlet, and rock it on her bosom, and smooth its ruffled down, and prattle to it, and kiss it, and so at last quiet her burning brain by the sweet insanity of her heart.

Perhaps the ecstasy of love is never far away from madness, and Margaret was in love, wildly, passionately in love.

The time came when she could not quiet her brain with any device. We do not always know how much our friend is to us, our senses lulled, if not dulled by custom and familiarity, and the certainty of possession; but let some calamity threaten, let death come, and we know whose hands have held our heart-strings.

All her tasks were performed, as usual, even more promptly by poor Margaret, but with mechanical rather than intelligent zeal ; her thoughts were elsewhere. She did not see the flowers she tended at the door, nor the birds that wrangled for seeds on the same stalk, nor the long reaches of dusty gold stretching up the lane at sunset. She did not know the words she read ; she did not hunger nor thirst, except with the hunger of the heart, and the thirst of the soul. She could look but one way, and at last the time came when she could go but one way.

One evening, being in the meadow to fetch home the cows, she turned directly from the hillside where she saw them feeding, turned without premeditation, without any thought at all, and walking rapidly, running almost, came to the door of the house where Samuel lived, and eager, pale, trembling, knocked for admission. She would know, once for all, whether Samuel were gone or not, whether he were dead or alive, and whether, being alive, he loved or hated ; she must know this or die.

Mrs. Whiteflock came herself to the door, and her face filled with a great wonder when she saw Margaret standing there ; it was something exigent that brought her at milking time.

"What in the world has happened ?" she cries ; "nothing bad, I hope."

"O no, nothing bad !" and Margaret's white cheek grew scarlet. The enthusiasm that had brought her began to give way. She heard merry voices and the clatter of dishes inside, with all the stir of excitement which hungry men make over their suppers, and Mrs. Whiteflock had evidently just risen from the table, for she held in one hand the half of a biscuit sopped in honey, and waited as one anxious to resume a pleasing occupation. Margaret hesitated, trying to invent some excuse ; her courage would not bear her through ; that piece of biscuit disenchanted her of her fears, saying very plainly, all here is well, and Samuel into the bargain !

She was stammering out some pretence, when the mistress of ceremonies threw wide the door, and completed her discomfiture by exclaiming, "Do come in child, and recover yourself ; you seem to be all of a tremble." Whether she

had trembled previously or not, she trembled now, and quite fell against the door-case.

"Mercy ! is any body dead ?" says Mrs. Whiteflock.

"No, ma'm," answered Margaret, in a little, low voice that seemed afraid of itself. "I want to know if Samuel is here."

"Samuel ? bless your soul, yes, here he is, if that's all you want."

She pushed Margaret forward as she spoke, and there before her frightened face sat Samuel, not as fancy had pictured him, pale, despondent, pining for her, but red, rollicking, his shirt collar open, and a pocket handkerchief girded about his waist, eating supper with half a dozen sheep-shearers.

Her face burned like fire when she saw the sly winks of the shearers, a rude set of fellows, and other coarse indications of a perception of the real nature of her errand. Doubtless the whiskey bottle had been in liberal use, and the natural animal buoyancy of strong health, thus stimulated to the dangerous edge of decency. Their ragged boots kicked at Samuel's legs under the table, and their well laden knives balanced midway between mouth and plate, when, at last, their roars of laughter subsided. "Eh, old feller, we begin to understand about that ere lamb you was a'talkin of to-day. You don't pull the wool over our eyes. No, sir !"

No doubt Samuel was glad in his heart to see Margaret, and be assured, as he was by her thus seeking him, of her deep and tender interest ; nevertheless, false pride or shamefacedness, or both, kept him from advancing and receiving her with any show of gladness. So that her confusion almost overcame her as she said, "Mother wishes to see you, Samuel."

"If Mrs. Fairfax wants to see me, she knows where to find me, I reckon, at home, and hard at work, where a poor fellow should be." And Samuel, who had partly risen, seated himself again as though he had nothing more to say. He seated himself, but ate no more, and if he had not partaken of something stronger than tea that afternoon, it is not likely he would have spoken thus. As it was he had wronged himself as much as he had wronged his poor little sweet-heart, drooping like a down-trodden wild flower before him. Every word had tortured him as he said it, but he

had pre-determined to meet her thus coldly, in vindication of his wounded pride, of his manhood, and of the slight which had seemed to be put upon him; and the sly winks, the rude laughter, and the nudges of the ragged boots under the table had helped him to execute his bad resolve. He would have unsaid all the next moment, if he could, and when he beheld the abashed face, and the little trembles about the mouth so precious to him, he could hardly refrain from going forward and kissing her before them all. He did no such thing, however; he put down his heart, and bore it through, saying only in a rough, indifferent way, "As I'm sent for, I reckon I'll go after my work is done; you may tell your mother so if you have a mind to."

Margaret could not know how deeply he had felt himself injured. She could not know how cruelly she had seemed to slight him, nor could she appreciate the conflict of despairing love and stubborn pride that was within him, rending and tearing and making him almost irresponsible for himself. She did not as yet suspect his bitterest grievance, and every separate word struck into her heart like a sharp stab. His cold, distrustful glance benumbed her like death; she felt the blood running chill in her veins, a whirling sensation in her brain, saw a darkness closing about her, and with just strength enough left to stand, turned away, scarcely for a time knowing whither she went. It was all like some dreadful dream, only she knew that it was not a dream; it was not a dream, it was not reality, it was not anything that she could by any possibility have conceived of; she staggered as she walked, and was half way home, — for she turned home by instinct — before she began to comprehend the nature of her situation.

She stood still, and lifted her eyes to heaven; the moon was coming up with her old, familiar look of gentleness and peace; she turned to the earth; the dew was lying gray along the grass, and, save the silver tinkling of the distant bells, a soft silence was gathering everything to itself.

Down the slope before her, nestled among its sheltering apple-trees, was her home; the small window of her chamber glittered in the moonlight, and the evening candle glimmered through the open door; it all looked strange and sad, as though she were seeing it from some new point of

observation, or as though it had undergone some sudden and melancholy change.

Across the fields, and half way up the ridge behind her, its pretty garden smiling in front, and sheltered and in part overarched by a clump of knotty oaks, stood the quiet parsonage, all its quaint gables and long porches and carved porticos distinctly outlined in the clear light. She thought of her mother sewing by the candle light, thought of the preacher reading in his study, of his smile and his beautiful hair, and then she thought of Samuel, red and greasy from sheepshearing; thought of his open collar and his hard words, and doubt and distrust, both of herself and him, stole like a thief to her bosom, and added a yet sharper pain to her pains.

She sunk down, utterly overpowered, and laid her face to the ground as to the face of a sister, took the long grass in her hands and covered her eyes with it, and moaned and sobbed as one utterly forlorn.

The dews and the night air chilled her at length, and in this way were the means of bringing her back to herself; she was still in the world of men, not in the world of demons; the sky was above her, the ground beneath; she was alive and must bear herself some way toward her friends and toward Samuel, but how?

She knew that she was absorbed by Samuel, completely absorbed, but what place he was finally to occupy in her regard she could not tell. In vain she tried to adjust herself to the new aspect in which he had presented himself. She could not but condemn his conduct; but somehow, after all, she did not condemn him. It was the whiskey; it was the sheep-shearers, with whom by necessity he had been thrown. He was poor and could not choose his occupation nor his friends. If it had not been for this, if it had not been for that; if she herself had not been so foolishly, so wickedly at fault, Samuel might have been blameless. He was the same as blameless.

Only that evening, within an hour, she had spoken a lie, as all who heard it knew; moreover, it must presently come to the ears of her mother. Samuel would fulfil his promise, and in the fulfilment of it would convict her! What should she say? She would have been glad just then if the hills had slid together and left her beneath them. But this would not happen; whatever was done she must do herself.

She had not, as we have said, condemned Samuel utterly, out of all hope ; nevertheless, she had no desire to see him, or believed she had none. She would have been glad, or at least thought she would have been glad, if the meeting about to take place between them could have been avoided. All she desired just then was to gain time ; for what purpose she did not know ; she did not even try to think. Another day, another hour, perhaps, she would see her way more clearly. But the time pressed, and there could be no delay ; at all hazards, she must prevent her mother from knowing what she had done ; her mother, who had no sympathy with her, who utterly discarded the fact that caused her to require sympathy. The mother must not know the child had been seeking the man she despised. She knew the path Samuel would take ; she would walk there, and, intercepting him, own the truth that she had sought him on her own and not on her mother's account. What further she should say she did not determine ; probably she would never see him more.

A long hour she had been on the path, walking to and fro, listening and looking, when at last she recognized the well-known step. He was coming, but not from the point she had expected ; he had already been to see her mother, having taken the highroad instead of the by-path, and was now returning home.

He had seen her mother, — had told her all, no doubt ; she was too late, — all too late. Anger and scorn came to her support in her humiliation ; such bad supporters do we sometimes get when we have nothing else to help us. She flew at him madly, for what is so mad as an enraged woman ! She accused him of wilfully, wickedly misinterpreting her ; he knew she had come to see him, and for nothing else ; he knew how much she had suffered ; he must have seen it all, and if he had been a man, if he had been any part of the man she had always supposed him to be, he would have come to the door, have come outside the door, and learned definitely what she wanted, instead of hanging back, and laughing with the sheep-shearers as he had done. Shame ! shame ! She was not only ashamed of him ; she was ashamed of herself that she had ever cared for so base a fellow !

Thus attacked, Samuel defended himself very earnestly, but with more wit than honesty, it must be owned.

He had understood her well enough ; to be sure he had ; he had understood her to say, and she certainly did say, her mother wished to see him. "Your lady mother," he worded it. He had always supposed her to be a young woman who spoke the truth and only the truth ; and how should he suspect she meant what she did not say. She had no trouble to express herself plainly ; that was clear ; he understood her now, he thought, if he had failed to do so before ; still, if she had any explanation to make, he was ready to hear it, — ready to do her justice if he had not done so.

He was singularly, provokingly self-possessed in all this, seeming to be master of himself and of the occasion, much more than was usual with him. The stimulant of which he had partaken had spurred up the whole man. He had not come in his sheep-shearer's dress, neither ; he understood the value which women attach to externals, and was all shining in his Sunday best ; even the daisy in his button-hole was not wanting, and the handsome beard had been cared for with special fondness. His hat was a little one side, and he played with the daisy as he waited for her answer.

Of course Margaret said she had no explanation to make ; what could she say, indeed, that she would say, and what would she say that she could ?

"I haven't any explanation to make, and I haven't any wrongs to right ; anyhow, none that you can right, Mr. Dale !" she said, haughtily, and this was all the answer she would give.

"Mr. Dale ! and this from you, Margaret !"

Samuel stopped playing with his daisy, and his chin buried itself deep in his beard. He had spoken with so tender, so sad a reproachfulness, that Margaret's heart almost misgave her, and when she answered, it was with some slight tremor of voice. "If you had come to the door," she said, "all this would not have happened."

"All what, my darlin' ? it isn't too late ! I didn't tell your mother." He had come close and put his arm about her, for he needed but a soft word.

She drew away, flinging off the arm as though it were contamination. "But you didn't come," she said, "and there's an end !"

"How could I s'pose, Margaret," (he was not yet quite sincere,) "that you had anything to say to me that you couldn't say before my friends and equals? I'm but a dull fellow, you know. His reverence yonder," (he pointed to the parsonage) "might a-knowed what you meant; I daresay he would."

"I don't know what his reverence would have known, but I know what you knew: it may suit you just now to call yourself dull. O Samuel? how could you? how can you?"

He drew nearer by two or three steps. "What had you to say if I had gone to the door — would to God I had — that you can't say now?"

Margaret saw her power, and abused it, as women have done, and probably will do to the end. She moved farther from him as she answered: "Whether or not I *had* anything to say, I haven't anything to say now, except this: It will be a good while before I trouble you with another visit!"

"You never did trouble me, Margaret; I was to blame, I was a good deal to blame, but I wasn't *all* to blame. Dear Margaret, don't let's throw away what may be, just because we've throwed away what might 'a' been!" He drew still nearer, and held out his hand.

She would not take his hand, nor suffer him to take hers. "I haven't thrown away anything," she said, "that I know of; nothing that I wouldn't throw away again, for certain."

"You've throwed away the happiness of your whole life; that's what you've throwed away!" Samuel answered, standing erect. "And I reckon you'll be sorry for it sometime. Sorry when it's too late, maybe."

Margaret laughed in derision, and he went on:

"You may think a ribbon at your throat, or a jewel hung in your ear, is everything, but I can tell you there are better things! and if you don't believe it, more's the pity. I have seen women that could make their poverty an ornament, and through their spiritual purity and heavenly-mindedness, shine with a splendor that shamed your purple and fine linen! Talk about the ermine of kings even, let alone the poor trifles that have turned your head; and what is it to the saintly robes that have been trimmed with

fire! There are things to live for in this world beside the idle fashion that passeth away; there's marvels and mysteries in the cloud and the whirlwind; the sunset and the star; the grass at your feet and the flower of the grass; the dewdrop, the wild bird's song; everything that God has made and give to us to enjoy and to be a cloud of witnesses of himself. O Margaret, Margaret, I feel sometimes strong enough to go right forward alone, leaving everything, even you, if you falter and fail, and prefer a white hand to a strong soul, and a soft voice to the love that is too tender and too true to be told by poor common words."

"A pretty excuse for silence, to be sure!" interposed Margaret, abruptly.

"Well, there *was* another reason," Samuel said; I didn't dare to speak."

"Didn't *dare* to speak!" echoed Margaret.

"No, didn't dare, both because I felt you was so much better than what I was, and because" — (he hesitated and went on) — "because I'd promised not to. I don't care, I'll say it all out now! A bad promise is better broke than kept. I give my word I wouldn't speak to you about love; but cuss the promise, and cuss the hour I made it! I will speak, and I do speak, and I swear I love you, — swear it by the mother of our Lord!"

Margaret drew back, startled this time by his bold impetuosity.

"You know it!" he cried, "you know it!" striding up and almost clutching her by the shoulder. "You know you're treading on my heart at every step; but what do you care for that! you're all took up with somebody else!" He let go of her now; his voice changed; his whole manner changed. "You may find men enough that know more than I do," he said; "and men that are more set off by outside tinsel and show; but you'll never find a man that's yours all through and through as I am."

He was silent now, for his emotions would not allow him to go on.

"I am glad you know there's other men in the world," said Margaret; "some, too, that know a'most as much as you do."

"You're crueller than you need be, seems to me," Samuel answered. "I know my shortcomin's all too well,

Miss Margaret. I know how fur, in pint of accomplishments, I fall below the bishop's son, for instance ; and more than this, I know how your head has been turned by his sleek ways ; how I hate him, — God forgive me ! ”

“ My head turned by Mr. Lightwait, indeed ! I should like to know when ? ”

“ Why in the meetin'-house, Sunday, for once ! So much turned, that you couldn't, or wouldn't see me, anyhow. ”

“ You wasn't at meeting, Sunday ? ” Margaret was betrayed by her surprise into more earnestness than she designed.

“ Maybe I wasn't ! and maybe I didn't see the fine gentleman bowin' so low, and speakin' so sweet ! and maybe you didn't drop your handkerchief in your scornful turnin' from me, and maybe you wasn't too proud to take it from my hand ! ”

“ I didn't see you, Samuel, as true as I stand here, I didn't ! ”

“ You didn't want to see me, Miss Margaret ; you always seen me before ; it was all of the bishop's son. ”

Then Margaret told with simple sincerity that she did want to see him, that she looked for him everywhere, that she was faint and sick with disappointment. “ Do you think if I had not wanted to see you, I would have gone to seek you to-night, as I did ? ” she said in conclusion. Samuel was silent, and she continued, for she had got upon the sore point now, “ Oh ! Samuel, if your enemy had told me you would ever treat me as you did, I would have called him a liar to his face ! I thought there was no man in the world like you ! I thought you were the only man in the world, for you were all the world to me. “ Oh, Samuel ! Samuel ! ”

“ And you don't think so now, darlin' ? ”

“ No ! I don't think so now. ”

“ Well, my Daisy, my little Daisy, purer than snow, I won't ask you to think so now, not just now ; but if you ever thought it, or anything like it ; ” he was on his knees before her, and both her hands in his ; but what protestation or proposal he might have made, or what concession or acceptance she, it is quite impossible to say. All at once, without premonition of sight or sound, a man passed them, so close, that his shadow darkened all the face of Samuel.

It was Mr. Lightwait ; both recognized him on the instant.

"Let me go," said Margaret, withdrawing her hands ; her whole manner changed and chilled and freezing. "I have stayed too long already ; what will he think of me, with you, in such a place, at such a time ? I wish I had not gone to see you ; I wish I had never seen you !"

Perhaps she did not design it ; perhaps it was mere chance, but the emphasis fell on the words *with you* in a way that was injuriously significant.

"With *me* !" cried Samuel, on his feet before the words were out. "God 'a' mercy ! Am I a man that it's a disgrace to be seen with ? I don't ask you to stay any longer, Miss Margaret, this time o' night, to be sure ! why the sunset is hardly done shinin', and as for the place, it's a'most under your mother's windows ! Cuss the thing ! I wish I had struck it down ; it's haunted me before to-night !"

"Hush, hush !" said Margaret, her finger on her lip.

There he was again, not a dozen yards from them, his fair face aglow with a smile of triumph. The moonlight fell full upon him, and he remained confronting them still as a statue, while the village clock struck nine. Both Margaret and Samuel noted it, and counted the strokes, as they had occasion to remember. It was strange, though they did not think of it at the time, that they should have counted the strokes, inasmuch as both were in a state of preternatural excitement. The "hush" of Margaret had done anything but hush her wild lover ; he had started as in act to spring, when she caught his arm, and, by main strength, held him back. She felt his untrammelled hand fumbling under hers for a moment, saw something shining in the moonlight, heard a little click, and then the sharp report of a pistol shot.

"My God ! my God !" This was all she said. Whether Samuel had torn himself from her arm, or whether she had let go of him, she could not tell. She had fled down the meadow, and the candle light from the open door had run out to meet her before she knew anything. She did not then pause to take thought, but rushing in, in all her wild disorder, fell to the ground, as it happened, between her mother and an evening visitor, who had entered the previous minute ; fell, fluttering, crying, like some poor bird, stricken in its flight.

"My child, my sweet child !" That voice was not her

mother's, and the breast to which she was being drawn with such tender solicitude was not that of her mother either. She sat up ; the crying stilled, the fluttering gone, and, with her hand pressed to her forehead, gazed in and through the face bending over her with a look of amazement amounting almost to terror. It was Mr. Lightwait who was thus soothing and supporting her.

A moment this perplexed look grew into his brows, and then she sprang away, laughing, weeping, making phrenzied exclamations, all at once.

Mrs. Fairfax was white with anger ; rage were the better word. Alone with the bishop's son, and all things so softly concurring, who knew what might have come of it, but for the untimely interruption of the little minx, her daughter ? She did not ask what had happened ; she did not care. She only said, " I am ashamed of you, child ! Pray, brother Lightwait, take no notice of her ; she is subject to these foolish fits, if she but hear an owl hoot in the dark." Then she told Margaret peremptorily to go to bed. Here Mr. Lightwait interposed. It was not safe to send the child to bed in her condition. Sister Fairfax was, for once, in the wrong ; it was quite natural, perhaps, that she should be a little impatient, but, for his part, he was curious to inquire into the affair. Then, addressing himself to Margaret, he called himself Father Lightwait, and approached her with such consummate carefulness and kindness, that she was nestled beside him, her head against his shoulder, all unaware. He could not, however, with all his arts, draw from her any intelligent account of what had befallen. She had seen a ghost, and she would give no further explanation.

" A ghost, to be sure ! And did it take the shape of a man, my dear ? "

" No, why should it ? " Margaret did not mean to tell a lie, nor did she feel in the least guilty ; the words seemed to have spoken themselves.

" O, I don't know ; I think the visions young ladies see, usually take that shape ! "

Margaret drew away.

" Do you know, my dear," he went on, softly putting her hair from her forehead, " that I am a little superstitious myself ? " and in answer to her look of pleased inquiry, continued, whispering the words in her ear, and brushing his

cheek against hers as he did so, "I think I will trust my little saint not to betray my weakness."

"If it's a secret, don't tell me," exclaimed Margaret earnestly; "I can't keep a secret."

"I will trust you against your own testimony. I would (he whispered again, very softly this time,) trust you against the world!"

Mrs. Fairfax, a little miffed at being over-ruled in the matter of sending Margaret to bed, had taken up her work. She was crocheting a pair of slippers for her visitor, and sat turned from, rather than toward him.

Margaret had put the confiding pastor a little back, with a motion of her hand, as he whispered this, but he was not disconcerted thereby; he took the fingers as though they had been given him, and having held them fast, not indeed letting them go until he had kissed them more than once.

"Mother, do you hear what Mr. Lightwait says? he has got a story for us!" cries Margaret, with that artfulness which is a part of the armor of women. Mrs. Fairfax faced about.

"I was telling your little daughter here, or rather I was about to tell her of an adventure I had to-night. I don't know as it's worth your hearing, but it interests me a good deal."

"Certainly." Mrs. Fairfax desired of all things to hear it. She said this stiffly, but Mr. Lightwait received it as the most gracious assent, and began: "In the first place, I designed to call upon you at an earlier hour, but somehow, one trifle after another prevented; and when I set out, at last, it was with the determination to take the path across the fields which, as you know, led me through Sister Whiteflock's garden; I was coming down the middle path between the currant-bushes, when all at once I became aware of some one behind me, and looking back, saw Brother Peter, with that strange look in his face that he sometimes has, you know, and handing me a piece of folded paper, he said: 'The spirit of a woman that seemed to be your mother, come to me just now, and made me write this—read it; I don't know what it is, but I know you are to read it right away.'

"I could not see to read the writing,—it is in pencil; and, putting the paper in my pocket, would have gone on,

but Brother Peter almost dragged me back. 'You must read it,' he urged; 'the woman said so.'

"Thus appealed to, I returned with him, and when he had lighted the candle, I opened the paper and read, what I will now read to you.

"This was the writing: 'I entreat that Bishop John walk by the high road to-night. From his mother, Bethy Honeywell.'

"This is all, and the strangeness of the thing is, that my mother (heaven rest her soul) was in the habit, during my boyhood, of calling me Bishop John; it was her pet name, indeed, expressing both her pride and affection at once; but it is years since I have thought of my boyish title, and certainly Brother Peter never heard of it. And yet another thing curious, to say the least, the maiden name of my mother was Honeywell — Elizabeth Honeywell, and my father, in familiar household talk, often called her Bethy, but she always wrote her name Elizabeth Lightwait, and that is the way I think she would write it now if she wrote it at all."

"But mayn't she have taken these very means to convince you of her presence?" suggested Margaret, all alive with interest.

"So! Have I made a proselyte before I am convinced myself?" The young man laughed that low, musical laugh that was never hearty, never sympathetic, and said, lightly, "If my mother could come to Brother Peter, why couldn't she come to me?"

"I don't know," said Margaret; "there's a good many things I don't know."

"What! is our little one so wise in her ignorance? and so sharp, withal!"

Margaret had not thought of being wise, or sharp, and she blushed all over, and certainly looked very charming in her bright, bashful surprise.

The eyes of the young preacher met those of the girl, just for an instant, and withdrew themselves, so that he seemed to be staring into vacancy, as he half whispered, half chanted:—

"O Helen, fair beyond compare!
I'll make a garland of thy hair,
Shall bind my heart forevermair,
Until the day I die."

"And did you come by the meadow-path, after all?" Margaret asked, as though she did not already know that such could not have been the case.

"Ah, I was going to tell you. I persisted in my first intention, and was about leaving Brother Peter and his conspirators, when he was seized with involuntary shudderings, and besought me with so much earnestness to pledge myself to turn back and walk by the high road, in case I should meet three geese flying toward me—one directly over the other two, that I gave the promise; but so little importance did I attach to it, that the whole affair was gone quite from my mind, when, as I struck into your fields, the whiz of wings caused me to look up, and there were the three geese directly before me—the one above the others! I then turned back, and came by the open road; but, I daresay nothing would have come of it if I had kept right on."

"I daresay not," answered Margaret, looking upon the ground.

"And now, I think, we have a right to ask for your story, but you are bound to secrecy, you know, about mine?"

O, yes, Margaret was bound; but as to herself, she had no story; she was not sure that she had seen anything.

The conversation between them was diverted at this point by the dog, Wolf, who walked deliberately in, and, lying at the feet of his young mistress, fixed his eyes attentively upon the stranger, growling and snapping his teeth, if he but so much as offered to touch her. Margaret was grateful to her shaggy friend, and set her little foot on his head, by way of restraining him from violence, but more in caressing than reproof.

The truth is, Margaret would hardly have been capable of self-assertion if this man had chosen to carry her off bodily, much less did she know how to parry his aggressive fondness. He was, in the first place, almost twenty years older than she, and in the next, he had all the policy, learning, and address of a Jesuit, mingled with the sadness of sincerity and the sweetness of love. Then his conventional ways and habits,—the very tie of his white neck-cloth, so consummately clerical and worldly at once; the great seal ring on his little finger was a terror to her. She

feared to move, — feared to speak in his presence ; she thought perhaps such fine people had rules for everything, and that, being ignorant of rules, she must, of necessity, be ignorant of everything that constitutes good behavior. Perhaps it was the fashion for clergymen, and more especially for bishops' sons, to kiss the fingers of little girls in fashionable parishes ; how should she know ? Maybe her shy ways were not only rustic but rude. If she could but know. If she but had some guide, some *formula* !

She was very uncomfortable in his presence, as it was ; that she had nestled to his side in the paroxysm of her first fear, does not prove the contrary ; she trusted him as the weak naturally trusts the strong ; relied upon him as ignorance relies upon knowledge ; but in her trust she distrusted, and her reliance was dependence rather than confidence. In some sort, the simple girl was fascinated by the accomplished man. Like a wild bird taken by the snarer, — one moment pecking food from the hand that holds it, and the next, crying and fluttering to be away, — so was it with Margaret.

So there they sat, the mother in her miff, intent, for the most part, on her bright wool thread ; Margaret, pale and flushed by turns, her hands unconsciously getting themselves hidden in her apron ; her stout guardian, with his speckled nose on the ground, and his watchful eyes upturned, his feet gathered under him, and his tail beating to the tune of tearing his man ; and the preacher, serene with himself and with all about him ; sorrowfully cheerful, graciously glad, benign, beautiful ; one white hand buried in his golden locks, and partly supporting the cheek that turned toward Margaret, and all his handsome person disposed to a mien of the comeliest manliness.

All at once, Wolf dragged himself forward a little, lifted up his head, and snuffed the air. Then a buzz of eager voices was heard, and men bearing lanterns were seen moving about the adjoining field.

The flush and the blush went out of Margaret's cheek now, once for all ; she did not move nor speak ; she seemed not to breathe.

"They are searching for your ghost, perhaps," Mr. Lightwait said. She did not smile ; she did not lift her eyes ; her fingers twitched a little, that was all.

"They are coming this way!" cries Mrs. Fairfax, throwing down her worsted work; "that was the garden-gate."

She was at the door; she was down the path; she had met the men. "Have you heard the news, Mrs. Fairfax?"

"No! What has happened?"

"Why, Sam Dale has murdered our preacher! Shot him to-night, right in your meadow here! The tavern-keeper seen him do it, and took him on the spot."

"What! the Bishop's son? Great God! Impossible!"

Mrs. Fairfax was so overcome by the thought of the murder of a bishop's son, it was so much worse than the murder of a common man, that all her senses were muddled, and her personal knowledge for the moment went for nothing.

"The bishop's son murdered? and by Sam Dale? Shot dead, you say!"

"Yes'em; shot with a pistol! Sam's give himself up! We all seen the pistol!" "I had it in my hand!" said one. "So did I!" said another. "They've got Sam's hands tied behind him," cried another. "Miss Hangerman cut her bed-cord and brought it for the purpose!"

Then some one said he wouldn't be in Sam Dale's shoes for a good deal; and was answered by the suggestion that perhaps there wasn't any such person as Samuel Dale! The fellow that called himself so might be named anything else for all anybody knew. He was a *gallus bird*, likely.

Mrs. Fairfax was beginning to come to herself by this time. "Have you found the body?" she asked.

"No, ma'am! We s'pose it's further down the holler than what Sam represented. Of course he'll lie!" Then they all said, of course Sam would lie; and most of them, that they never liked him from the first. He looked like a highwayman — like a thief — like an assassin!

"Just follow me!" cries Mrs. Fairfax, quite come to herself now, "and I'll show you where the body is! Sam has mistaken his man, thank the Lord!"

When Mrs. Fairfax, overcome by curiosity, left the house, she had seized Wolf by the collar and dragged him with her; and the bishop's son, taking advantage of this and of Margaret's stupor, immediately rose, caught her in his arms, pressed her to his bosom, kissed her forehead, her

cheeks, her mouth, again and again, and with a God bless you, my child ! was gone ; his interest in what was passing without, if he had any, sacrificed to a dearer interest.

There was, therefore, no one except pale, stupefied Margaret to be seen when the eager faces pressed in at the door.

"Where is the body ? You said you had it ! Fetch us to the sight of it !"

Such were the mingled demands and exclamations, as the wild crowd went from one dark corner to another, fumbling and feeling the way, or holding their lanterns before them, preternaturally anxious for a sight of the bloody corpse.

Margaret caught the word "murder" joined to that of Samuel, and with one long, heart-breaking moan, fell insensible to the ground.

When the tumult subsided, they found her lying as one dead ; her faithful Wolf beside her, licking her hands, her feet, and making at her ear a little numbling chatter of sound, as though he would say, "Come back, little mistress, come back to life ; it is not so bad as it seems."

"Here to-night, the bishop's son ! ten minutes since ? You are mistaken, madam, that is all, or else you have seen his ghost. Samuel Dale has acknowledged the murder and given himself up ! He says, moreover, that your daughter was with him when he did the foul deed, and will confirm his statement. I am just come from Mr. Lightwait's house, and he is not there, nor has he been there since a quarter before nine ; and agreeably to the testimony of the unfortunate prisoner, the murder was committed at or near nine o'clock, just about leaving time for the murdered man to have reached the spot where the terrible tragedy is said to have been enacted."

The person thus delivering himself had but that moment made his way through the group to the elbow of Mrs. Fairfax ; he was the village doctor, — by name, Prosper Allprice. He was a short man, with a round bald head, black, small eyes, set close together, a high nose, and little dimpled chin. His ears were big and white as gristle, his fingers short, stumpy, and shining with rings, and his feet so short and so wide as to resemble club feet. Add to this, wiry red whiskers, sheep teeth, and the stomach of a full-fed cock, and you have some approximate notion of the

external presence of Doctor Allprice. His waistcoat on this occasion was crimson, dashed with black ; his trowsers white duck ; he held a yellow kid glove in one hand, and a superfluous eye-glass dangled from his button-hole. His conversation was full of professional wisdom set off with Latin. A single wave of his hand awed back the eager crowd of workmen and mechanics, peeping over one another's shoulders for a glimpse of the girl in her fit of languor, or whatever it were ; and, dropping on one knee beside her, he produced a medicine case, and essayed to administer some sort of restorative, but her teeth were found to be fast locked ; nothing could move them.

"It ain't no common faintin' fit," says the grocer. "My daughter, Addely Maud, she had one, somethin' like this to all appearance, and no doctor-stuff could git her out of it nuther ; at last someby tole that Miss Whiteflock's man, he could bring her to ; so, everything else failin', we sent for the critter, and, dog on, if he didn't do it !"

"How ? how ?" cried one or two, but there were more sneers than questions.

"How ? why, ding me if I can tell you ! he just put his hands onto her, and said over a kind of a prayer, like, or somethin' that sounded religious, anyhow ; and, dog on ! she opened her eyes and sot up — Addely Maud did !"

Then it was whispered about that some one had better fetch Peter Whiteflock, but Mrs. Fairfax would not hear of it ; and Dr. Prosper Allwise was so professionally outraged that the very top of his shining head grew scarlet.

"Nothing serious, my dear madam, nothing at all !" he said to Mrs. Fairfax ; "a slight derangement of the *stomachus*, or rather of the musculo-membraneous reservoir connecting with the *æosophagus* and *duodenum*. There is a fine sympathy, madam, between the upper *orificium* of this membraneous reservoir and the seat of sensation and reflection lodged in the brain-pan, *cranium*, or skull. These instances of depression are somewhat rare, but by no means unknown to the practice ; a little phlebotomy, or venesection will, no doubt, have the desired effect." And Dr. Allprice whipped out his lancet, and punctured a small vein in the left arm, without ceremony. No blood. Another puncture, deeper, wider still — not a drop. "My dear madam !" the fingers of the doctor flew from wrist to tem-

ple, and from temple to wrist, and the sweat-drops stood on his forehead; "my dear madam! the pulse is quite gone! In short, madam, life is extinct."

"O my child! My sweet, sweet child! O my God, have mercy!"

Here, for once, was a reality for the frivolous mother, and she forgot her affectations, as she dragged the rigid form across her lap, and held the bright young head against her bosom; but, perhaps after all it was more an instinctive clutching after what was her own, that impelled the cries and caresses, more the rebellious struggle against a personal wrong, than the genuine passion of a bereaved and breaking heart.

A nature like this woman's is incapable of the sublime, even in suffering.

After the first wild burst of madness, the doctor, with such tender and soothing words, as are customary, led the distracted woman away.

"She bein't dead! not accordin' to my notion," says the grocer, pressing up. "She looks just like Addely Maud over again, anyhow. I'll bet a quarter of a dollar Peter could fetch her to."

"O, my good friend, run and fetch him," cries the mother, and then she falls sobbing again; and the doctor chafes her hands, and produces smelling-salts, and nods to the grocer to fetch Peter. "It will pacify her," he says in a whisper, "and do no harm."

The body had been straightened, and a sheet spread over it from head to feet; there was no need to compose the features, they were singularly placid, though icy cold and rigid, and the measure for the coffin was about to be taken, when Peter Whiteflock, in his shirt sleeves, and champing at a green apple, was led in.

He pushed the sheet from the face with the toe of his shoe, champing at the apple all the time, and when he had gnawed all round the core, clean and close, he tossed it away, aiming at a cat that sat peaceably upright in the door-way; and this feat accomplished, he wiped his hands on his trowsers-legs, and proceeded to remove the shroud, manifesting, as he did so, a mixture of haste, irreverence and anger. He had no sooner touched the hand, however, than a change which was almost a transformation came over him.

His face grew radiant, his voice low and softly modulated, the whole man seemed not to be Peter any more, but quite a different sort of person.

"She is not dead!" he said, and then stooping, he spoke in her ear some words in an unknown tongue. After this, he made a pass or two with his hand, from the forehead downward, and immediately she smiled, and answered him in a strange tongue, the same, apparently, in which he had addressed her. They conversed a few minutes thus together, the girl making signs the while as though she were acceding to some instruction; and presently Peter reversed the passes, and she opened her eyes, and sat up, all her senses restored, calm, collected; more mistress of herself than she had ever been in her life. She evinced neither alarm nor surprise at the questioning and cross-questioning of Dr. Allprice. Yes, she had seen Samuel Dale that evening; she had happened to meet him as she was fetching home the cows, and had conversed with him for a short time; he appeared to be in a state of excitement, but she saw nothing to indicate insanity. She distinctly remembered the time at which she separated from him. She had heard the striking of the village clock, and counted the strokes; it was nine o'clock. She did not see Mr. Lightwait, and he could not subsequently have been there, inasmuch as she found him at her mother's house on reaching it; he remained with them the entire evening, and was, in fact, but just gone when the men entered who were in search of his body.

This statement produced the greatest excitement and confusion. That the murder had been committed, was past doubt. The tavern keeper had himself witnessed the act, and taken Samuel, who confessed to the accusation, immediately to the magistrates. Mrs. Fairfax and Margaret, if they had seen anything, must have seen a ghost. *Women* didn't know what they saw at the best of times, but now in their excitement, there was no use in paying any attention to what they said! One or two even ventured the remark that both Sam and the tavern keeper were crazy, but Dr. Allprice gave it as his opinion that Samuel was of as sound mind as he himself, and that he entertained a high estimate of his own soundness every body knew.

Meanwhile news continued to be brought in, a good deal of it "turning of no turning at all," and the gist being that

Samuel had quietly given himself up, but that as to the cause of the murder, he refused to explain, saying that he was ready to give his life for the one he had taken, and what further had men to do with it !

At midnight. Mr. Lightwait had not returned to his house, nor had his body been found.

Could it be possible that Margaret was in complicity with the murderer ! Such whispers began to run, and she and her lover were spoken of as the girl, Margaret, and the man, calling himself Samuel.

Dr. Allprice gave it as his opinion that the man, calling himself Dale, had, for some unknown cause, committed murder on the person of John Hamlyn Lightwait, and subsequently, or previously, it might be, for some unknown cause, administered poison, in some subtle shape, to Margaret Fairfax, minor, and daughter of the well known and highly esteemed Mrs. Margaret Fairfax, in, and of the premises.

"Where's Peter Whiteflock ?" inquired the grocer. Peter was gone home, long ago. What was wanted of him.

"Well, nothing particular, as I know of," said the grocer ; "but he hesitated to open the door for me, when I went after him to-night, and when he did open it but a leetle crack, he stood into that as tho' he was afeared I'd see inside, but I did see for all of his care, and I could almost swear that what I see was Mr. Lightwait, hisself, a settin' into Peter's cellar, alive and hearty. I wouldn't swear it, but dog on ! if I don't believe it."

At one o'clock, the party had divided ; about half the number, including Dr. Allprice, who took special charge of the ladies, remaining in and about the house of Mrs. Fairfax, while the other half dashed off in search of Peter Whiteflock, and his visitor ; the greatest excitement prevailing everywhere.

CHAPTER V.

COURTSHIP OF PETER WHITEFLOCK.



Madeline! O Martha! O Mary! O Lucinda! Charley, Charley! Cartwright! Pete, O you, Pete! Come here, and see what I've found!"

"What is it, Lute? What is it? Say, O say! What is it, Luther?"

"Come and see, if you want to know; am I a-goin' to find things, d'ye s'pose, and track 'em to their holes, and then carry you onto my back to come and catch 'em and have the hide?" And Luther Whiteflock mounted the hollow butt of a fallen tree, thrust his hands deep in his pockets, spread wide his legs, and cocked up his head. The astronomer, when a new planet swims into his ken, would but inadequately represent what the young discoverer felt just then. He had only to wait, now, and the world would come to him. How the little legs flew under the petticoats; how the elbows worked their way through the air; how the hair of the girls was tossed and tumbled, and how the eyes of the boys glistened, and how their red cheeks shone! There they were, all round their brother Luther; Madeline, and Mary, and Martha and Lucinda, and Charles and Cartwright, catching for breath, plying questions, tremulous with hopes, and radiant with admiration.

Peter came up hobbling behind the rest (he was lame) with two bright spots in his pale cheeks, and his great eyes staring wide. "What is it, Lute?" he said, reaching between his stronger brothers, and catching the discoverer by the trousers-leg.

Luther kicked out his foot, and hurt Peter in the arm, so that he cried.

"Cry-baby! calf!" sneered Luther; "run home and tell mother, won't you?"

"I'll go and tell father; it ain't the first time you've kicked me, and you did it a-purpose!"

"Of course I did! a-pullin' at me when I was busy. I'll do it again, if I want to; and you may tell the old man as much as you're a mind, if that's all!"

"Then I'll tell mother; I ain't a-goin to stand it any longer; you seem to think I was just made to be abused!"

"Certainly, Pete, that's what I have you for!"

The little fellow could not stand this, and limped off in the direction of the house!

"I wonder if the little fool will tell?"

"To be sure he will; and I hope mother will give it to you."

It was Madeline, the next younger than Peter, who said this; all her round face on fire with indignation.

Luther slid from the log, and was up with Peter in a moment; it was quite another thing to have his mother know of it. She would probably give it to him as Madeline had said; not for her love of Peter, who was by no means her favorite, but from her love of authority.

"I didn't go for to do it, Pete. I was just in fun! Now, don't tell, that's a good boy!"

Peter was touched by a soft word, and stopping, drew up his sleeve; the flesh was swelling hard, and turning purple.

"I'll tell you, Pete, what's the best thing in the world for such a bruise as that!" Luther began to be frightened.

"Why just cover it up like as if it wasn't there, and don't mention it to nobody in the world, and laugh all the time."

"But how is a boy to laugh? Would you laugh if you had it, d'ye s'pose?"

"Yes I would; if you done the like, accidental, to me, I wouldn't tell onto you; I wouldn't be so mean. I'd pretend to be in high spirits. 'Cause, don't you see, tellin' wouldn't do me no good, and it would do you hurt! What good could it do me to have mother use a strap onto your tender shoulders, or to shut you up in the garret, for half a day? or both together? I wouldn't think of it; I'd stand it somehow!"

Peter began to be ashamed of his less generous, less heroic nature. "If I could only keep from showin' it," says he, "I wouldn't tell; but just look! it is swelled out as big and black as what that bunch was on old Posey's

knee, before father cured it, and if it makes me cry, I can't help it, you know."

Luther was getting the upperhand; he drew himself up, and spread wide his legs again.

"Pete, boy!" says he, "let me tell you one thing; some things in this world is too precious for to be used common; for instance, if you had the gold head what's onto Mr. Lightwait's cane, would you fling it at a bull-frog in yon pond?"

"No; if Peter had that precious treasure, he would not fling it at a bull-frog in yonder pond."

"Clear common sense, Pete." And Luther slapped him on the shoulder. "You see a stone would do as well, and better too."

Yes, Peter saw that.

"And you'd have your gold for bigger occasions!"

To be sure. Peter saw clearly.

"Well, then, suppose you had somethin' else as precious as gold, and wanted to obtain another end just as common as killin' a bull-frog, would you use this ere precious thing for this ere ignoble purpose? D'ye foller me, boy?"

Peter was not quite sure that he did follow the philosopher, and was silent."

"You wouldn't, you say? Of course you wouldn't! one case is clear as t'other; now, then, to the pint." And with the fingers of one hand, Luther, with much stress of manner, laid the *pint* in the palm of the other hand, thus:—

"For the sake of illustration," (he had got that of the preacher,) "we'll suppose this bunch on your arm to be the bull-frog; we'll suppose you want to be shet of it, — d'ye foller me, boy? To be shet of the bull-frog is the thing you're after, and the means that'll shet you is of secondary, or we may say, thirddary importance; now you have got two meanse into your power, — one's precious and one isn't; the precious one is truth, and you could use it if you was for to be fool enough! But are you? No, you say you ain't — of course you ain't; you know clean things ain't made for to be used agin onclean. You foller me, boy? Truth is the precioussest thing what there is, and it's made for to be sot agin occasions ekally precious; do you foller? When anything else'll serve as well, the ginerall rule of the best managers is not to sile it by bandyin' it about! Anyhow, that's

what Mr. Larky told me the way was with forehanded fellers, mostly, and *he* knows, you bet."

Peter hung his head and looked bewildered. "Do you mean for me to tell a lie?" says he. And then he says he don't like Luther Larky; "that's why I call you Lute, — I don't like him you're named after."

"Likin' him ain't here nor there!" says Luther, loftily; "he's got money into his pocket; he has!"

"Yes, but he didn't get some of it honest; he sold more sheep t'other day than he gave in onto the account he showed father, 'cause I counted the sheep."

"Eh! you own yourself a spy, do you?" sneered Luther; and then he advised Peter not to meddle with Mr. Larky's affairs, and then he got back to the main question.

"You ask if I want you for to lie!" he said. "No; I'd scorn it! I meant what I said, for you not to knock your bull-frog into the head with your gold! Say, for instance, if your arm busts out o' your sleeve with swellin', so that you are compelled to say somethin', that you fell down and hurt yourself."

"But I didn't," answers Peter.

"Didn't! blast it! there you're belittlein' the truth again! You've fell down many a time and hurt yourself, hain't you?"

Yes, Peter had often fallen and hurt himself.

"Are you obliged to particularize the time, I'd like to know! hey! dumbhead! One way for to get along is to wriggle; a snake hain't got no feet, but he'll wriggle along faster than what some beasts can that have 'em."

"But I've got feet."

"Yes, and they're made to stand on when you want to be upright; but s'pose you want to go through a narrer hole?"

Peter saw one thing very clearly; he was not to tell the truth, and he saw, too, that it would not cure him to get his brother punished, so he pulled down his sleeve and buttoned it, and followed him back to the seat of his great discovery, half ashamed of having threatened to tell.

Luther was still slightly apprehensive, for when does guilt ever feel quite safe? so he said, as they went along: "If you don't see into reason, Pete, I'll give you the skin of the varmint if you won't tell!"

"I don't want the skin," says Peter, but he did want to

see the fun, and was soon at the butt end of the log, on his knees, and his head poked quite inside.

"O, Pete, I've thought of somethin'; just the thing!" cries Luther, giving the lad a punch in the ribs.

"What is it?"

"Why, you are the one to crawl in after the varmint! 'Cause you're slim, first off, and next off, 'cause maybe the critter'll bite you, and if he does," (here he spoke in the lad's ear,) "you can lay the sore arm onto that, you know. In with you! I'll boost!"

Peter stuck his head in again. "I can't see him," he said. "Crawl in further; don't be afraid." And then Luther turned to his brothers and sisters: "Tell ye what less do; in the first place, the varmint what's into there, is a mink; but when Pete gets him out, less shut him up in the smoke-house, and give out among the boys that we have got a mountaineous mink what's escaped from a show, and charge a quarter apiece for them to see him! he'll exhibit good if we just call him mountaineous; the mountaineous, double-bellied, and three-eyed mink. Golly, that'll do! Go in, Pete, and fetch him out!"

"I can't see him."

"Look harder!"

"What?" cried Peter; he could not hear well inside the log, and drew out his head, his hair full of bits of the rotten wood, and his eyes blinking.

"You can't see him?" cries Luther angrily. "*Now*, can you see him?" And he knocks him on the head with his double fist.

Peter could not see the mink any better for the knocking, nor is it probable that he could have seen him any better, even if he had been in verity a mountaineous, double-bellied, three-eyed mink, which he was not.

With his hair full of chips, scaled from the rotten lining of the log, and his face all bepowdered with dust, through which the tears were washing channels, he set out for home, crying pitifully, and limping more than common.

"What's the matter, my little man?" cries Samuel Dale, overtaking the lad, for he, too, was returning home, the day being ended, and the working done.

"Don't you see that great big star just a-top 'o that strip 'o black cloud? Well, that's little Peter's star; just see

how bright it shines ! Peter's a-goin' right towards it, isn't he ? he'll soon get there if he only stops a-cryin' and goes ahead."

But Peter cried on ; he didn't feel that he was gravitating toward the star, apparently, seeing which, Samuel caught him around the waist, and hoisted him up to his shoulder, calling himself Peter's horse, and running with him quite upon the trot.

In this way he brought him to the door of the elder Peter's cellar. " Now the old horse is going to throw his rider," he cries, and with that he let the boy down very softly, and slipping into his hand a bright red apple, told him to wait inside till he should come back.

The half hour was gone by ; the strip of black cloud over which the big star had been shining, had by this time widened itself over half the sky, and the winds were making lonesome noises among the full-leaved trees ; the darkness was sombre, and all the sights and sounds of nature seemed tinged with melancholy. Such times will sometimes fall upon the summer's high carnival of glory.

The tallow candle, with its wick a-lop, burned dimly in one corner of the cellar ; it was set in an old iron candlestick, and the candlestick was set on the head of an oaken barrel, containing vinegar, and beside the candlestick lay the old Bible and hymn-book, from which Samuel was used to read of nights. The glittering eyes of a big black cat that was the habitual companion of Peter, shone out from under a chest of tools, and now and then her stiffening tail was heard making dull thrums upon the floor, if a mouse were heard to peep. The branches, as the wind went through them, creaked against the wall, and these were all the sounds that came to Peter's cellar. He was sitting near the open door, looking out into the night, his cheek drooped upon the head of his little son, who, forgetting his tyrannical brother, the great discoverer — forgetting all the hardships and sorrows of his young life, was gone to sleep on his father's shoulder. His bare, scratched legs, and brown, hardened feet, dangled far below his trousers ; one hand had hidden itself in the bosom against which he rested, and one was round the neck that bent above him ; his face was streaked with tears, and all his clothes were ragged, buttonless, at loose ends generally.

The trustful abandonment of the picture was perfect, and the expression of tender sadness in the father's face was very touching. Samuel Dale trod softly as he came near, and took off his hat as he passed; every manifestation of sincere love was sacred in his eyes. He went straight to the oaken barrel which he had converted into a sort of oratory, by trimming it with bright field berries and green leaves, opened the Bible and began to read to himself.

"Read out," says Peter, directly; "I feel more'n common like hearin' the Scriptor to-night; right where you happen to be readin', don't turn back." It happened that Samuel was reading in the ninth chapter of Saint Mark's gospel, and, as Peter requested, he began at the verse he had reached; the seventeenth:—

"And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away; and I spoke to thy disciples that they should cast him out, and they could not.

He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto me.

And they brought him unto him; and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed, foaming.

And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

And oft-times it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters to destroy him: but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.

Jesus saith unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead."

"Read that agin," says Peter; "it kind 'o sets me a thinkin'."

So Samuel read the verses over, going on to the fortieth verse, when Peter interrupted him again. "Read that verse over, and read it loud and slow," he said.

Samuel read:—

"And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbade him, because he followeth not us.

But Jesus said, Forbid him not; for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil me."

"Don't read no more now," says Peter; "my mind is ketched away, and I see the spirits of men the same as James and John saw Moses and Elias, when they went up into the high mountain."

Samuel closed the book, and they read no more.

It was an hour, after this that the child lying on his father's knees cried out in sleep: "O, father, mother won't give me my supper! She's got visitors; the preacher and his sister, and she won't let me come to the table. She says I'll make 'em think of you!" Then his voice sank, and he muttered something about Miss Lightwait's shawl being lined with the skin of a double-bellied mink, and about his brother Luther, who he said was unscrewing the gold head from the preacher's cane. Then he cried out sharply, and as if in great pain, that a hoptoad was gnawing off his arm, and he was afraid to tell any body. "Poor little chap!" says Peter, "he's in trouble even in his sleep; Sam, come and see him, and tell me if you think his looks is so agin him."

"Why no," says Samuel, bringing his chair close to Peter and sitting down. "What makes you think his looks are agin him?"

"Some thinks his looks is like mine," Peter says.

"Well, s'pose they are! And now as he sleeps I can see he favors you more than I knowed for." And Samuel lifted the dangling legs and laid them across his knees, so the two men were holding the boy, together.

"It seems kind a hard," Peter says, "that I couldn't be let to have one out o' thirteen, look a little like me!" and he takes out his jack-knife and polishing the blade on the

palm of his hand, which is about as hard as a bone, holds it up and proceeds to look in it as though it were a glass. "Sam, bring the candle close."

Samuel brought the candle, snuffing it with his fingers by the way, and held it close to the shining blade. "Why don't you have a looking-glass?" he asked.

"Why don't I? that's easy asked, young man."

Then he went on with the examination of his face, removing the blade at intervals, and studying the face of the boy. "Thirteen of 'em," he said again, "and only this one that shades me at all. I wish I could be let to have it so in peace."

"But you are let; the boy looks like you, there's no doubt about that."

"Yes, he is let to look like me by the Almighty, but Sam, there's them that would undo his work if they could; and when I see how his looks go agin the boy, I a'most wish he was all hern, like the rest."

"You don't refer to your wife?" says Samuel. And then he adds, "Beg your pardon, Peter, for such a thought."

"Wife!" echoes Peter, "I hain't heard that word, not as applied to your mistress, since the day I was married. Say it agin, Sam; it kind o' gets up my self-respect, like."

"Mr. Whiteflock," says Samuel, "I would like to have a little plain talk with you, with your leave."

"Mr. Whiteflock!" echoes Peter, reproachfully.

"Then I'll say Peter, if you like that better; but have I leave to speak plain?"

"Sam, I ain't used to havin' leave asked; it puts me out, like; you just go on."

"Then I will begin by saying that you have got as pure a soul and as sweet a heart in you as any man need have, but what you lack is self-respect; you don't hold up your head among men as you ought to, and as you have a right to!"

"Hold on just a speck, Sam; she don't think I've got any rights; and what she thinks, I respect, even when it's agin me; she's a woman in a thousand, Sam!"

"But you have rights, my friend, and you ought to hold up your head, both for your wife's sake and your own, and also for the sake of your children."

"For her sake, to be sure! as if I could reflect any credit onto her! Why, it would be like as if a glow-worm should try to shine in the face o' the sun!"

"Well, then, hold up your head for your own sake, shine or no shine!"

"See here, Sam; you know more'n I do, but it strikes me this way: if nobody cares whether you hold up your head or not, it'll naterally go down!"

"But, Peter, everybody cares for you. I never heard a word against you in my life."

"That's too gineral, Sam; altogether too gineral. Every man that is a man wants to be held up in particular; and if, instead of being held up he's held down, by having a millstone round his neck, the chances of his carrying a high head is somewhat agin him."

"But you haven't that, Peter; you have, on the contrary, a wife that loves you, and children, a whole baker's dozen of 'em."

"Sam, you said right in one particular; you said I had a wife on the contrary. Now, with all her excellent qualities, she is that, eminent, and, I may say, pre-eminent."

"But even suppose that to be the case, she loves you, of course, all the same."

"On what do you found that opinion, Sam?"

Samuel hardly knew what to say, but without much hesitation, answered, "Why, because she's married to you, to be sure."

"Married to me," says Peter; "well I s'pose she is, to some extent; but as for her entire devotion to me, unfortunately for my perfect felicity, doubts has sometimes crep into my bosom, on that pint, and them's the millstones at which I hinted a while ago, metaphoric."

"You must banish 'em!" says Samuel, promptly. "If any sleek chap ever comes between you and the girl that has got your heartstrings in her hand, you just try that yourself, will ye?" Samuel blushed and remained silent for a time, but replied after a little, "I take it for granted that a wife loves her husband."

"So I did, too, when I was married," says Peter; and then he says, "I don't say, when *we* was married, because, though I married her complete, she, as I said, only married me to some extent."

"What do you mean?" says Samuel.

"I mean this, Sam; our marriage wasn't one o' them kind which makes two folks into one. And now, Sam, honest speakin', and not as though you was into a pulpit or a-givin' evidence into a court for to get your case, do you believe, to the best of your knowledge, that there is any such marriage as that?"

"Most assuredly," says Samuel.

"One more question, then. Do you believe, honest speakin', and not as though you was into a pulpit, or a-givin' evidence into a court to gain your cause, that I am married in full, so to speak, that is to say, the same as married men in general?"

"That's another question," says Samuel.

"Of course: didn't I say it was another question?"

"Well, then, I suppose you're married the same as other folks."

"Then, Sam, I draw this conclusion: — Marriage doesn't make a man and a woman one, but directly tother!"

"I can readily understand," says Samuel, "how it should bring out certain obscure qualities into bold relief."

"Relief?" says Peter; "I never seen nothing which was relief belonging to it;" and then he says, "You began by askin' leave o' me to speak plain, and now I ask leave for to speak plain to you; the subject is one that ought to have but little said about it; it's things as they stand between me and your mistress. Maybe we're one, but I can't see it so: I see it a way, which is the tother, but at the same time I'm distrustful of my judgment, for I don't see no two that does seem to be just one; in short, I don't see no marriage that seems to me to be a marriage in full! Now what I ask o' you is to set me right. But first of all, understand, Sam, that I don't blame your mistress for whatever she's done and said that wasn't into my favor; she didn't do it and she didn't say it of her own head! She's been set agin me, Sam, by them that their disposition wasn't good towards me, — an unfortunate circumstance, but that's all you can say, for 'tain't her fault, first nor last. She was perfect, original, perfect, Sam."

"Fifteen year we've been married, that is, to some extent, and I never spoke her name except in the way o' makin' out a good case, but now I perpose to speak, not as though I

was into the pulpit, or onto the bar, but as sperit to sperit, and as man to man, and I desire you to render solemn judgment onto what I say, for I am going to make my will."

"Your will, Peter? you're crazy!"

"Well, Sam, maybe I be! and that's the pint which I'm comin' towards. Maybe my unfortunate doubts, as to my bein' married in full, has sot me crazy, and maybe ourn is as much in full as anybody's, and that is what I want your judgment onto."

"I would rather not pronounce judgment as between you and your wife; it is a delicate matter."

"As to that, Sam, I don't think it's either delicate or indelicate, but mind, I don't want you to stand between me and her; there is enough between us now! I want you to hear, simply, and simply to hear, and then I want you not to judge between us, mind, but to judge onto the whole situation."

"It may be that I've steeped my thoughts into crime when I've suspected that your mistress didn't love me in full, because, Sam, you must have noticed one thing, — she is the most modest of her sex! a woman in a thousan'! and she may not have been able to make free with me! Sometimes her modesty has carried her so far that it wouldn't allow her to show respect for me; and if her nater could a been understood by the harsh world, it wouldn't a been so unfortunate, but as things looked, and as the harsh world is, I didn't seem to be married in full, that must be owned."

"Then, too, your mistress, from the beginnin' of our life under one ruf, had them about her that their disposition wasn't good toward me, and what with modesty, and what with their unfortunate influence, she never expressed that partiality for me which she cherished, I trust, in her bosom."

"To come to the plain truth, she done things sometimes that must 'a' been greatly agin' her sweet nater, and this was one of 'em. Upon an evening in the fore part of January, the first of our livin' under one ruf, them that their disposition wasn't good toward me, got round her by unfair means, and put things into her mind that she never'd 'a' got of her own head, and she got worked up so that she put her hand onto the key o' the door, and twisted it round, leavin' me onto the off side!"

"You don't mean to say that she locked you out o' your own house, Peter?"

"Bless your heart, no, Sam! I didn't say she locked me out at all. She was in her own room and I wasn't, and havin' had things put into her mind that she wouldn't a thought of her own head, she put her hand onto the key, and twisted it round, leavin' me onto the off side. But I wasn't an eye-witness, and I can't give strict evidence onto the pint; she may have just touched the key, and then it may have partly twisted itself like. I've heard o' chamber doors a-doin' so, besides hers."

"What did she say for herself?" says Samuel.

"She said I took up too much room."

"And what did you say then?"

"I didn't say nothin' in my defence; how could I? nater was agin my case; I was big and took up room, there was no denyin' of it; besides, it was ill-convenient for her to talk to me through the door, and I didn't want to ill-convenience her, so I went quietly away."

"Woman has her freaks, Sam, freaks that she's subject to by nater, but when things comes to be put into her head in edition, good gracious mercy!"

Here he proceeded to relate some of these freaks, premising that they were always put into his wife's head by them that their disposition wasn't good towards him.

"When the loaf of bread happened to be burnt on one side," says Peter, "as it often did happen, your mistress, bein' drawn off from her household affairs so much by her Christian duties, the slice which was burnt the blackest was give to me; and if one potater was less than the others, that was the one which was give to me; and if one slice of steak had all the bone in it, and none o' the meat on it, that was the slice which was give to me. She was put up to it, Sam, and I don't blame her. I was fond o' sugar in my coffee, and your mistress never give me none; she said invariable that she forgot it; but them that their disposition wasn't good toward me, their sugar was never forgot. It looks little in a man, I know, to mention such trifles, and many a sufferer is silent from pride, which is taken by the shaller multitude favorable, and so things goes for things that things isn't, in many a family; but this is a solemn occasion, and I speak without the customary reference to effect that pervails in married life. You'll excuse me, Sam?"

And you'll just answer me a question or two, if you please. Is it natral for a woman to be graceful everywhere but at home, and disgraceful at home? And is it natral for a woman to be a comfort to strangers, and to be uncomfortable to her husband? Is it natral for her to give him things which he don't like, constant, and to give him things which he likes, inconstant?"

"Perhaps such things are natural enough," Samuel said, doubtless shaping his answer to please his friend, rather than in accordance with his conscience. And then he added, "You know in marriage, two are one, and it is quite natural to forget one's self."

"Then, Sam," said Peter, all his face lighting up, "if that is all natral and common, and if you know it to be so, why, we're married in full, and not to some extent; because the aptitude o' your mistress in the way o' puttin' slights onto me, amounts fairly to genius!"

After a moment he went on. "I s'pose it's agreeable to the law of nater that briars should grow among roses, but it does seem to me, Sam, that into the marriage crown they might 'a' been put a leetle more sparse.

"Well, one day as I sot onto a log into the edge of the medder, reflectin' onto the mystery o' the heart, and more particular o' the heart o' woman, I concluded a conclusion, and this is the conclusion which I concluded. Married life, Sam, has high capacity for happiness into it; things, however, don't allers follers capacity for things, and low happiness, therefore, sometimes follers high capacity, because things is as things is, and things isn't as things isn't, which is to be regretted. Now, if things was otherwise, they'd be otherwise, but they ain't, and things being as things is, one percaution becomes a man, which is not to trust a woman so far as to put his peace o' mind into her keepin', she's whirling, turnin' this way and that, by natur, Sam; but she's also wheedlesome, and this more special after a man becomes hers, legal! I don't say this to be agin woman; I ain't agin woman as woman; I'm only agin some o' the ways which she has!"

"And was this crown you speak of briery from the beginning?" says Samuel.

"From the beginnin', Sam? Lord bless you, there wan't no beginnin' to it!"

"What I meant is this: were these slights put upon you from the beginning?"

"And don't I tell you, Sam, there was no beginnin'; but from the first of our livin' under one ruf, they was; that is to say, they was outard; but what tender feelin's may have been into the heart of her that put 'em, all the while, ain't for me to say, because what was outard mayn't have been inard; things was put into her mind that she wouldn't a thought of her own head, by them that their influence was unfavorable to me, and she isn't to be judged by common standards."

"No beginning, Peter! how could that have been? You must have courted, surely."

"Well, yes, I s'pose I may say we did; but it was all done across a meader, Sam, clean across a meader. I was a ploughin' with my old mare Posey; she was young then, and beautiful."

"Across a meadow!" says Samuel, interrupting him; "how so?"

"Sam," says Peter, "I'm agoin' to astonish you now with an astonishment beyond all calculation; so gird up your loins. And in the first place, let me ask you if you'd take me, judgin' of me, outard, to be a romantic man?"

"Well, hardly," says Samuel.

"No? And yet I've got a heart that's set a-flutterin' whenever I look upon a momento connected with my courtship, the same being a bed-blanket! Ah, Sam, I see you begin to open your eyes, but you'll open 'em wider yet before I'm done. I never revealed to mortal that which I now trust to you, and I know you won't prove trustworthless."

"Do you see that are chest in the corner?" He fumbled in his pocket and produced an iron key, rusty and big. "Take this and unlock that chest; now feel under the tools in the upper corner, and you'll find another key; got it? Well, now, unlock the till; there, what do you see now?"

"An old bed-blanket," says Samuel.

"Take it out, Sam; there, now, unfold and spread it out; a purty sight, ain't it? Look here, Sam, all the romance o' my life has been wrapt up in that blanket this many a year. Sometimes, of windy nights, I get it out, and hang it into the winder o' the corn-crib, so't I can both see it, and hear it flop; it makes me young agin, Sam, that does!"

"But there must be a chapter belonging to it," says Samuel.

"A chapter! heaven help you, man! there's a whole volume if it could only be writ. But where's the hand, competent to such a work? Where's the hand? It can't be writ, Sam, and it can't be told accordin' to its merits. If it was all painted out as I see it when I was young, it would strike you blind; but to the courtship. Matty Hansom, when I married her, and when we began to live under one ruf, was the purtiest woman that ever you set eyes on; you can well believe that, for her beauty to this day is something wonderful. Well, Sam, I fell in love with her, and she hild herself above me. I don't say she hadn't a right to; I only say she did. Anyhow, I took her hand, trustin' to the futer to win her heart; but Sam, my hopes was founded into ignorance, for as far as my observation goes, the tendency of love, after marriage, is backard, rather than forard! Mind what I tell you, Sam, and if you happen to know a young woman that is purty, and at the same time holds herself above you, steer clear!"

Samuel winced; he was not quite sure that he didn't know just such a young woman. And Peter went on.

"My love was ginoine, Sam, ginoine, if ever love was. I thought the daisies wasn't white enough for Mattie to walk on, and I thought the sunshine wasn't soft enough to touch her lovely head! I'd 'a' built a world a-purpose for her, if I could 'a' had my way. I couldn't sleep for dreamin' of her, and I couldn't work for thinkin' of her. I was plowin' that piece of land that overlooks the old man Hansom's house, and also a narrer strip o' bottom ground that had been set off for Matty's marriage portion, about twenty acres in all, and was more possessed with her than common, insomuch that when I got my field plowed one way, I turned about, and plowed it another, and so went across and across this way and that, just for the pleasure I had in beholdin' the ruf under which my beloved abode. Sometimes I'd lean on my plow and gaze at the winder where she sat sewing her wedding-dress, and try to make believe I was plowin' for her sake; and it would seem to me that if my fancy was only reality, my pumpkins would grow as big as the moon, and my bean vines twine their rings around the stars. My passion was all pent in my heart, because Matty not only

hild herself above me, but was engaged to my deadly enemy, Luther Larky. I'd been plowin' a month or more in the same field, when one day I sees the old man Hansom cross that bottom land o' Matty's, and make toward me. I felt my legs grow limber all at once. "He is thy sire!" I said, gazin' at the winder, and I run forard and took my hat off. "How do you do, Peter?" says he, and "What'll you ask for half a dozen of your best South Downs?" And then he said he wanted 'em for his daughter Matty, who was a-goin' to be married to Luther Larky. My heart came into my throat, and I took the old man's hand, and spoke out. "I've got the sheep," says I, "Mr. Hansom; you can see 'em if you're a mind to go across the holler. Just you go home, and tell your daughter Matty, that all the sheep I've got, and all the paster they feed on, and all I've got, whatsomever, is hers, if she'll consent to take the same, with an incumbrance — meanin' myself. That's the way, Sam, I rounded up, and I've always thought it could not 'a' been handsomer done. The old man looked pleased. "How many on 'em is there?" "Fifty odd," says I, "and they're all hers as I said, with the incumbrance. You just go home, and tell Matty this, and tell her if she sees it into a light favorable, to signalify the same by hangin' a bed-blanket in her chamber winder! You begin to see the romance, now, don't you, Sam? But to proceed: "Tell Miss Matty," says I, "this is a momentuous thing to decide sudden, so I'll give her time, and if she signalifies me by sundown, I shan't consider she's took too long, and she may expect me over, just allowin' time to shave and fix up."

"A hundred and twenty-five acres, and fifty odd sheep, besides other things incidental," says the old man, speakin' to himself like; and Luther Larky hardly worth the shirt onto his back!" and he set off walkin' fast, and never mindin' the rheumatis in his legs.

"Mr. Hansom!" says I, for I'd thought of a last movin' appeal: he stepped back a little, and set his foot up on a stump; "Tell Matty," says I, "if she doesn't signalize me by the aforementioned time, that instead of lookin' for me over to her house, she may look for me under the tuff under the green tuff," says I, "and when I'm there, and when she's happy with another, I request that she may sometimes bestow a thought onto me!"

"I tried to keep on plowin', but I couldn't; my legs went down into the furrer limber as willer-wands; then I tried to sing; my throat was dry as sand, so I stopped my critter, right in the furrer, and to keep myself from lookin' at Matty's winder, went and set on a stump, with my back that way, and began to calculate the time. "Now," says I to myself, "the old man Hansom has got to the holler; now he is goin' up the hill; now he has got to the gate; now maybe he is as far as the stoop," and I twisted right round, for I could not set still; and as true as you're a livin' man, Sam, there was the bed-blanket a-floppin'!"

"That's it, Sam, that's the very blanket, the blessed, blessed article a lyin' at your feet! No man never sot eyes onto it since that romantic hour. The old chest isn't worthy to hold it, and I've always intended to get a mahogany case, but she's ambitious, Sam, and my means has been mostly took up in gratifying her elegant tastes. She was born to shine. But where was I? O I know now; Well, when I looked round and beheld the blanket a-floppin, words can't picter my sensations. I seemed to see the marriage crown o' roses, and I didn't see the briers which was hid in it; in short, I didn't see things as things is, as what man in love does! There was no ordinary way in which I could express myself, so I took off one o' my shoes and throwd it at a blackbird that was innocently a-hoppin' along into the furrer; then I spoke right out to my mare Posey. I hid my face agin her neck, and called her all pet names that wasn't her true name, and havin' Matty into my thoughts, and kind o' makin' bleve that it was her, I took hold o' Posey's ear, and says I, 'this is my little ear, isn't it?' and then says I, answerin' myself, 'yes 'tis, 'tis, 'tis!' This'll show you, how deep I was into love."

"I don't think I could have got to the old man Hanson's if circumstances hadn't favored me.

"Just as I stept out o' my gate into the high road, old Mr. Stake, the butcher, and the father o' the present incumbent, comes a drivin' along with two live calves, and a yearlin' shote, in his cart; he was in high spirits, for he was a makin' money hand over fist, and had just bought the shote he had aboard for two dollars, expectin' confident to double his money on him; and bein' in high spirits, with his great windfall, he asked me, 'Peter,' says he, 'wont

you get in and ride?' and then he says, 'Maybe you ain't agoin' fur, though?'

"He was a delicate-constituted man, and that was the way he had of askin' where I was agoin'.

"'Not a great way,' says I, 'a matter of two miles or so,' for I wanted to throw him off the track, and it seemed to me as if he must know where I was agoin', and what for. And then I said I was agoin' to Mr. Sprague's to look at some fine lambs which he had; I had my own sheep in my head, and I couldn't think of nothin' else to say.

"'Two-legged lambs, I guess,' says Mr. Stake, 'by the look of all them ruffles in your bosom.'

"We was passin' the old man Hansom's gate as he said that, and I felt my face a burnin' like fire, for certain, thinks I, he sees Matty's picter in my heart; and I put on a look which it was meant to be a look o' surprise mingled with regret.

"And then, says I, speakin' up brisk, 'Bless me, if we haven't passed the old man Hansom's! I never noticed it.' You perceive, Sam, that love had made a consummate actor of me.

"Matty sat at the winder, and I knowed she see me a-comin' down the path, but she didn't look up nor smile,—it was her modest way, I thought,—and I rapped at the door, with my heart beatin' so loud she might have heard it without my rappin', but not until I had bruised my knuckles a good deal did she speak.

"At last she raised her eyes and looked at me, and their light struck through me like icicles; I thought I had been deceived, perhaps, and with trembling voice I said, 'My dear Miss Hansom, there's some misunderstanding I'm afear'd betwixt us; make me the happiest of men by the assurance that the bed-blanket which it now flops above thy lovely head, was intended to signalify me that you would!'

"Still she sat without a word. 'Speak, I entreat thee,' says I, and then in more moving accents, 'I entreat thee to speak! One little word,' says I, 'will either nurse me into bloom, or blight me into dust! Shall I, then, bloom,' says I, 'like a young branch, in thy smile, or shall my mortal remainder be laid at thy feet, under the green tuff?'

"I was onto my knees now, with all my soul into my eyes, and she lookin' at me, but her look was not level, but more as if I was on the ground and she at a four-story winder.

"She looked like a queen; Sam, and I like some poor suppliant for the crumbs that fell from her table. When she spoke at last, it was to ask me how many acres my farm contained, and how many head of cattle and sheep I had, and then I knew that my proposal was accepted.

"Directly she told me that she had loved before, and says I, 'Don't speak of it; the heart that was his is mine.'

"And then she said they was always to be friends, she and Luther, the best of friends, and that I was never to interfere with the friendship.

" 'Don't speak of it,' says I agin; 'whatever my angel does will be right.'

"And then she said, *that* being settled, there was nothin' more to say, and I might go home; she had yet to see Luther that night, and make known to him what was to be and what wasn't to be.

"I was too proud to be told twice, and as I passed under the winder, down comes the blanket a-floppin' onto my head. I tell you I held onto it, and put it round my neck, and hild it to its place, makin' believe like that it was Matty Hansom's arms about me, and that it was she that hild instead o' me.

"That's the blanket, Sam; that's the very blanket, a-lyin' at your feet! Put your hand on it; put it agin your face!

"And now, Sam, you know the finest piece o' romance into all history. I loved that woman, Sam, and I love her yet; and if she was different in her feelin's toward them that their influence is agin me, I wouldn't give her for no other woman in the world!

"I've thought, sometimes, when I've been a-shapin' up a haystack, and got it into a particular pleasin' form, now if this was only Matty instead o' the grass o' the field! and as I raked off one side and put it onto tother, I've thought, now if I was only takin' this from them that their influence is unfortunate to me, and makin' the same in my favor, I wouldn't envy none o' the crowned heads in the world."

"O, Sam, I haven't been without my hours of mixed pleasure! but they've come spare, Sam, dreadful spare, specially in my married life.

"I don't say nothin' agin marriage, Sam, but I do say this; to depend for happiness on the smiles of a woman

when that woman is your wife, is purty much like dependin' for your light, on shootin' stars! It's good enough light, Sam, but takin' one night with another, it's spare!

"And here, Sam, I want to give you a piece of advice, and this is it, and it is this: I speak forcible, for I feel forcible on the subject. When you're courtin' a woman, don't say nothin' about your sheep nor your sheep paster, nuther your hereditaments, nuther your horned nor huffed cattle; I don't say it'll be took advantage of, Sam, but its just as well not said; and I don't say it'll have any effect whatsoever, but just s'pose'n it should! What's the vally of a hand, Sam, that ain't swung into yours by the motive power of the heart? Instead of bein' a lily in your bosom, Sam, it'll be a thorn in your flesh.

"But if you shouldn't heed the warnin', and should after all prefer the light of shootin' stars, spare and uncertain which it is, and uncertain and spare, then here is another piece of advice that I would put forcible too, and it is this, and this is it: Keep your feelin's considerable under your own control! Yes, Sam, keep 'em under your own control considerable. The more you think of a woman, Sam, the less she'll think 'of you! Furdermore, when you come to that pint where you can't live without her, you'll find invariable that she can live without you. Woman likes uncertainty, Sam; if she doesn't know whether you'll come or not, why she's a-dyin' to see you, but just let her be sure of you, once for all, and ten to one but she'll go to flirtin' with another! Otherways she'll read a novel before your face and eyes, or go to sleep. In short, Sam, let a woman be once certain of you, and thenceforard you're never certain of her!

"Pour down a little water and you can pump up more, but s'pose you fill your pump full? But I'm leavin' my story. It was Saturday that I behild the bed-blanket a-floppin' from the winder, and a Tuesday the follerin', Matty Hansom who had been pronounced Mrs. Whiteflock, came to live under my ruf. Now livin' under the same ruf with a woman, and seein' her when she ain't on her guard, as a woman natarly is, ain't at all like seein' her across a meader, and it ain't like seein' her when your a-courtin' her, even though you're in the same room with her. Why? do you ask? Well Sam, because things isn't as things was. We was no sooner under one ruf than I see that what I had

said figurative about being her slave, had been took literal, and was to be so hild forever. Other things that I had said was took so too. I'd said, aforehand, that I didn't expect no dowery, and didn't want none, but I wasn't on oath, Sam, and being which I was a courting, I colored a leetle high; but here I was took literal too, and the twenty acres was withhild. I'd 'a' had Matty, Sam, if she hadn't 'a' had a shoe to her foot, but the twenty acres would'er been took by me, grateful for all that; the gift would 'a' been a mark of respect showed to me that would a built me up into my own estimation like. Mark what followed. Three days we had been under one ruff, when her father, he drives over to my paster a lean heifer with a broke horn, which he tells me she is to be give for Matty's sake, but that the twenty acres isn't to be give! That disappointment I could a swallered if the lean heifer with the broke horn hadu't 'a' been give, but that, Sam, was an added aggravation, and an aggravation indeed! I never got over it. The sight o' the heifer was like pison to me, and the more that Mattie made as if there was no cow on the place but her; so one day when I was a-mauling rails, I took the maul and I knocked her on the head.

" 'Matty,' says I, when I first placed her under my ruff, 'this is all yours.' 'Of course! To be sure,' says she. Still, being set to find it, if there was any feeling for me in her bosom, that was ginoine, I says, 'Command me, henceforad, my angel!' 'Henceforad and forever,' says she. 'All my heart is yours, Mattie,' says I; 'that you know, but its beating for you,' says I, 'is like the beating of some wild, warm wave on a stone,' I says.

" 'Let me see,' she says, and her hand begun to fumble about my pocket. I was all of er trimble like, and, opening wide my arms, I called her my timid dove, and told her to come into 'em! 'What a child you are,' says she, and she turned and left me without another word.

" But what I have to tell you next, Sam, will freeze the blood in your veins. Under pretence of feeling for my heart she stole my money-bag, that had in it at the time a hundred dollar note, and thirty-five dollars and sixty-two and a half cents in hard cash! A day or two after the purse was took, John Holt, my neighbor, had a vandue, and among other things, a gray mare to sell. Bids run high, as they mostly

do when a set of men get together that they don't know what they want. I bid up to a hundred and twenty dollars on the mare myself, which having done agin my conscience, I held ; but Luther Larkey, he set his elbows out, and set his lages wide, and bid right ahead against men that could 'a' bought and sold him, till the mare was run up to a hundred and thirty-five dollars, and there she was knocked down to him.

" 'You'll give your note, I s'pose, at six months,' says John Holt, down in the mouth like, for he knowed very well the money from Luther was uncertain at any time, howsome-ever futer.

" 'No,' says Luther, speaking up loud ; 'I prefer to pay down !' And he out with my purse and counts my money afore my very eyes !

John Holt was a man that he was suspicious, and he examined the note careful. 'It's good,' says Larkey ; 'if you have any doubts, s'pose we take the judgment of Mr. Whiteflock !' And with that he puts the note into my hand, and having gloated over me, counts out the thirty-five dollars in hard cash !

" I don't say how he come by that money, Sam, I only say she took it and he had it. Try to imagine my feelings, Sam ? I couldn't reproduce 'em in your mind, and I wont try. Words is mockery into some cases.

" Two months Luther Larkey rid that mare about the country, and all that time he never did one stroke of honest work, which time, at the end of it, I was took down with a spell of ager, and when I got up, behold ye, Luther had been hired on the farm, as chief manager ! It was the act of friendship on her part, your mistress said, and I wasn't to interfere. My spirit is naterally proud, Sam, and it towered up then. I wont be under him, says I, and I wont stand to the side of him ! And then I took to the cellar ! It was taking a bold step, Sam, but I've maintained it. Looking at things as things is, and not as they seem outerd, what is the judgment that you pronounce on the case ? Am I married in full, or only to some extent ? "

Samuel felt constrained to speak as nearly the truth as he might, and replied that from his standpoint, the marriage was not in full.

Peter received the verdict as a man might receive his

death-warrant; in a solemn agony of silence. At last he said, turning and apparently speaking to the air, —

“Good friends, does this judgment wrong her whom it most nearly concerns?”

CHAPTER VI.

PETER TALKS WITH SPIRITS.



WO distinct knocks that seemed to proceed from the ground under Peter's feet followed his question.

“No,” says Peter, “they say that you are right,” glancing at Samuel. Then addressing the air again, —

“Tell me, good friends, shall I do with my little Peter and with Posey what I had in my mind to do?”

Numberless knocks, clear and decided, followed this question; they were under Peter's feet, on his chair-back, his shoulders and head — everywhere.

“Thank you, good friends, that'll do,” he said, and then turning to Samuel: “What furdur I have to say concerns myself, exclusive, and my last will and testimony. Be of a truthful and sober mind, Sam, for there is them about that hear, and will hereafter hold you to account. Won't you, spirits?” This, to the air again. Knocks resembling the others followed; such sounds as one might make with one's knuckles on some hard substance, only of a more hollow and fugitive character; this time, however, they were about Samuel, and even on his person, insomuch that he stared about him in amazement; he saw nothing, and turned to Peter. “They won't harm you,” says he, “they are friends.” And then, he says, “before another year comes round, Sam, I shall be under the tuff — under the green tuff — so far as the mortal house goes! Don't shake your head, nor smile, Sam; it's been foreshowed,” — here a lively sally of raps

interposed. "Just please be still, my friends, for a space, till I shall have concluded my testimony," says Peter, and then he goes on. "I've been warned, Sam, and I'm ready and glad to go; I've only one tie to bind me to this sphere, and that's him that lies on my knees."

His face grew radiant, and his language conveyed more clear and definite meanings.

"I'm a-going to make him over to you, Samuel, him and Posey, and then I'll be free for good and all,—his mother will not object,—he is like me, and she will not care to be reminded of me, when I am gone, and I shall not care to have her. I've stood in her light too long, maybe. Nothing has been her fault. I began with doing a wrong to her and to myself, and how should I expect right to come out of it, or good; her heart was another's, and I took her, knowing it. Did you ever have a feeling in your sleep, Samuel, that some person stood by your bed? No? Well, I have, and I've waked and seen 'em standing there. A few weeks ago I went to bed one night with my soul a-reaching 'way out of me, for brighter and better enjoyments than it had known, when about midnight, as I lay with my eyes closed, but not asleep, this feeling came upon me with awful power; there was a little stir, as of garments rustling, and then a soft hand was put in mine. I looked up, and there, standing beside me, was a woman with her raiment white as snow, and flowing about her like a mist of glory. She illumined all the room with herself, and she was lovely beyond the rose or the lily, or any flower of the field. I inquired why she came to me, for I didn't feel worthy to be blessed by her beautiful presence, and stooping so that her bright hair fell about my face, she told me in whispers that she was come to tell me good news; the voice of my soul had reached her in her beautiful country, she said, and she was come to satisfy its longing. 'You will be among us, and of us,' she said 'before the year is out; be patient, and give yourself to peace.' Then she showed me a picture of the land I was to inhabit; a thousand times greener and sweeter than that piece of earthly land I had coveted so long. Presently all the scene vanished and the woman vanished, the room was dark again and I was alone." He shook slightly, and the radiance passed from his face, he was all himself again. "She's been standing by me, Sam," he said, "all the while I've been talk-

ing about her ; she overshadowed me like, and kind o' lifted me out o' myself. But this is what I meant to say — when I'm gone, Sam, I want you to have my treasure — my little likeness — him that's on my knees ; I want to give him to you, Sam, and in trust to you, for him eventual, the bed-blanket ! and this is my will and my testimony. Promise to take the lad, Sam, and it will be to me like a rainbow, in my sunset sky, and from this time we'll talk do more about it. Him and Posey ?” He turned from the living man before him to the invisible spirits, if such there were, asking questions and receiving answers through raps and other signs, that he professed to understand as well almost as the articulations of human speech, awaiting the replies reverently, observing special courtesy, and in all ways manifesting the deepest sincerity of conviction.

In vain Samuel tried to persuade him that he was under some great delusion and near to lose his wits ; in vain he told him that he had dreamed a dream, that his midnight visitor had been all in his imagination ; he could no more move the steadfast faith of Peter than he could have moved a mountain ; besides, at every word of dissent a perfect tumult of ghostly sounds assailed him on every hand, so that in sheer despair of being heard, he was forced to suppress his skepticism at last. “Your spirit friend may have been mistaken, at any rate,” he says, “and we'll talk about wills and testaments, Peter, when your seventy years old !” But Peter would have no evasion, and at last, to pacify him, Samuel gave the required promise, upon which, the look of wonderful beauty before mentioned came back to the sad, heavy face of the strange man, and he laid the sleeping boy on the strong arm of his young friend.

“He loves me now,” he said, “and his love is precious to me, but you, Sam, by degrees, and easy like, must wean him away from me ; I want to see it a-doing while I'm here so as to be sure it'll all be right when I'm gone ; I want to see my flower striking root, so that I shall know he is going to take kindly to the new soil.” As he loosened the little clinging hands from his neck, he turned away, and passed his rough hand across his face. “Don't mind me, Sam,” says he ; “don't mind me ; I'll get used to it by and by.” He took up the bed-blanket, folded it very carefully, and put it away in the till of the chest, and having by this process diverted,

and sat himself up, he returned to Samuel's side with an apple, bright as gold, in his hand, together with some rude toys of his own manufacture.

"Give him these, Sam," he says, "like as if I'd never seen 'em, and coax him out with you to the meader sometimes; and if you happen to find a flower in the furrer, pick it for him, and tell him stories, Sam, about boys that have good-for-nothing fathers, that they set moping into old cellars, and had better be dead; and tell him all such boys oughtn't to care for their fathers, nor to go nigh 'em; but ought to take to nice young men that they're healthy and smiling, and'll bring 'em up into right principles. Take him on your knees, Sam, right afore my face and eyes, and talk to him as I've drawed the picter of it, and his thoughts'll pint to me naturally. Don't shake your head, Sam, I shan't mind; on the whole, I think it'll be amusing to me; I'll enjoy it vast, Sam! it can't be otherways." He spoke loud, and with a forced liveliness, and at the conclusion, bent down so that his face was away from Samuel, and untied and retied his shoes, "Confound all shoe strings," he said, "I never had a pair that they'd stay tied!" And then he said he felt unusual happy.

"I'd rather not do this, Peter," says Samuel; "you've got so little as it is." And then he says, "If it should happen to me to outlive you, I'll take your boy into my house and heart; you may make sure of that; but Peter, just look at this arm." He had shoved back the sleeve; the arm had swollen as big as two arms and was turned of a purplish black, mingled with angry red.

Peter laid the arm tenderly on the palm of his great hand, and after a moment of thoughtful silence, said addressing himself to vacancy, as before. "What shall Samuel do for his boy? Won't you tell him, good friends." Raps on the head of the vinegar-barrel, which Samuel had made his oratory, followed this question, loud and fast. "Shall I call the alphabet, friends?" says Peter. Three distinct raps. "Ay," says Peter, and he repeats the alphabet, beginning with A, and calling slowly until a rap on the oratory announced that he had reached the right letter, the which, marking in pencil, he began anew, and when another letter was rapped upon, marked that, and so repeated the alphabet, and marked the letters, until a sentence was spelled out.

And in this way he conversed, or seemed to converse, with persons or things invisible, for half an hour, at the end of which he got the information he wanted. "Now, Samuel," he said, "do as I shall direct, and that arm will be all right in the morning; but one thing I enjoin — you must make as if you done it all yourself, and that nothing of it is owing to me. It'll be a good beginnin' for you, and a good one for me too." He laughed as he said this, but the laughter was hollow and melancholy. And then he adds, with real interest, "Here's a spirit, Sam, that wishes to communicate with you!"

"Very well," says Samuel, hiding a smile by ducking his face behind the boy, "tell him to go ahead."

"It's the spirit of a man," continued Peter, and he says he'd give his name on my arm."

"Indeed!" says Samuel; "I shall like to see it!"

Peter began twitching and trembling, and in about half a minute, thrust his shirt sleeve back to his elbow, and displayed, in fiery red letters, the name of John C. Sparks.

"He says he's your uncle! did you have an uncle John?" says Peter.

"Yes, but he ain't dead! You've made a slight mistake somehow!"

Peter inclined his ear, and seemed to listen. And then he said, "He tells me he ain't *dead*, but that he's passed on — and now I see the picter of a red mill, on the wall — did he own a mill?"

Samuel turned now and looked at the wall where Peter looked, but he could see no red mill. "Tell him to give us all his name, if he is here," he says, "we want to know what that C. stands for."

Peter listened again. "His spirit tells me," says he, "that if you will look under the Bible that lies on the head of the vinegar barrel, you will find a piece of folded paper with his name writ on one side, and with something else writ on t'other side that'll make you wiser than you are."

"Just look under the Bible! just for the fun o' the thing!" says Samuel.

"I wouldn't make light," says Peter; "spirits don't like it, treat 'em just the same as you would if they were in the body;" and lifting the Bible, he took up a-piece of folded paper, having something written upon it. "See if it's right,"

he says, handing it to Samuel, who turning it up and down, and this way and that, at last assented — "it's the name, and no mistake," he says, "and it looks like his writing too! John Catwild Sparks. If it had been anything but Catwild," says he, looking at Peter curiously, "I wouldn't have wondered so much;" and slowly and thoughtfully he unfolded the paper.

He turned white, and then flushed and trembled, and sliding the boy from his knees, rose and stood before Peter with the open paper in his hand.

"You double-faced villain!" he cries, "did you ever see this writing before? and who was it writ for, and what more was writ? The truth, sir, and nothing but the truth!"

Peter read the writing, and then backing against the wall, seemed dumb with terror.

"Speak!" demands Samuel, "and mind that you speak the truth — I'm not in a temper to be fooled with, I warn you!"

"I don't know what to do," says Peter; "I don't know what's right — I promised him I wouldn't tell."

"Promised who? But I know who! And so you are using your devilish machinations for a cold-blooded pretender, and agin me, are you?"

Peter hid his face in his arm, and shook like a leaf in a storm.

"I wouldn't have believed," Samuel went on, "that you would a lent yourself to such devil's work! I see now why that smooth-faced hypocrite is prowlin' about here o' nights! it's to get you and Satan in league agin me, and agin an innocent child, is it! God 'a' mercy! I thought I could 'a' trusted you, Peter!"

"And so you can," stammered Peter, at last; his hand before his eyes, and the tears running through his fingers. "I am no more to blame, Samuel, for what is writ on that paper than the baby unborn, unless so be that you blame me for having anything whatsoever to do for him that it's writ for."

"Him! Who? I know, but I'll make you say, for all that!"

"If you know, Sam, why would you make me say? I promised him I wouldn't tell nothing about his coming here o' nights. Folks don't like to have it known, mostly."

Samuel remembered now that he was keeping a bad promise, all the while, and relented, a little. "Well, then, you needn't call his name," he said; "it was writ for Mr. Lightwait, and its bearin' is all agin me and agin an innocent child who is dearer to me than my life; tell me only when it was writ, and why you writ it."

"In the first place," says Peter, "him that it was writ for has been a friend to me, and, Sam, I hain't got no friends to spare; he's lighted dark hours for me, and I hain't got none too much light; I don't know nothing agin him, and I don't want to say nothing agin him; so far as he's spoke o' you, he's spoke praises, and that was one thing that made me like him; he told me he was in trouble, and that drawed me to him still more; and so tother night it came about that he says to me, 'S'pose, Brother Peter, you ask the spirits if they can advise me?' and never dreaming of harming nobody, I asked, and what's writ on that paper is what was writ through my hand, to him, and the spirit that writ it was the spirit of his mother. I didn't know a word of it at the time, and I hardly know now, for I glanced hasty, and I can't read writing much, no how; read it for me, will you?"

"If you couldn't read it, why did you tremble and turn pale? Don't try to deceive me, Peter, it'll be worse for you, if you do."

"I trembled because I knowed the paper, and I knowed who the writing was for, and because I didn't know what was writ, but guessed from your anger that it was some way agin you; and God knows I speak the truth. O, Sam, don't turn agin me without looking at it fair all round."

The heart of the man was evidently in his words, and Samuel, going to the candle, read the paper. The writing was in pencil, and the paper crumpled and torn, but he read with an instinctive apprehension, from the first glance. This was what was written: "Bishop John, can, and will outwit his rival, if he perseveres; Margaret's eyes will be dazzled, her pride will be pleased, and her better judgment may then be overborne by a stronger will; it were better, however, that she should marry S. D. The young Bishop is, therefore, earnestly admonished to desist from a pursuit that must inevitably bring pain to more hearts than one. Let him leave the butterfly among the roses, while its wings are

untarnished, and while his own conscience is clear." Signed, Betty Honeywell.

"As I understand it," says Peter, brightening up, "the advice is all in your favor."

"Yes, and the promise all in his," says Samuel, bitterly. "What does he care for advice, to be sure — even though it was give by the angel Gabriel — he wouldn't heed it, not in this case."

Like all men who are in love, Samuel thought that every man must needs see with just his eyes. There was a good deal more talk between the men, in which Peter labored hard to convince Samuel that he did great injustice to the bishop's son, but at every word he damaged his cause. What to the one seemed simple honesty and brotherly regard, seemed to the other adroit management and artful calculation. "He comes in so friendly like," says Peter, "and takes my hard hand in his soft one, and calls me brother, all the same as if I was a class-leader!"

"I dare say," answers Samuel, with a sneer.

"And he praises your mistress so, Sam, and that's sweeter to me than rain to the thirsty ground."

"Ah, to be sure, he knows what he's about."

"And he talks o' you with such admiration, Sam."

"Yes, I'm just the sort of a man he would admire!"

"Then he reads our hymns, and he makes them sound a'most like the anthem when it's sung in the meetin'-house."

"O, he's cunning."

"Maybe these things don't seem o' much account to you, Sam, because things is as things is with us, and inard things make outard things fit, and your soul is not hungry and a-cryin' out in you as mine is, I don't s'pose."

"Yes it is," says Samuel, "crying out with a wilder and a hungrier cry; and woe to him who comes between me and my rights."

"Him that we're talking of wouldn't do that," says Peter. And then he tells Samuel what kind things he said about him the last time he saw him."

"I dare say," says Samuel, "but he was just leadin' you through!"

"Leadin'?" says Peter — "no he want, he just kind o' made me go myself, and made me say things that they was a'most agin my own will; he's gifted high, Sam."

"Yes, but with dangerous gifts, he's mighty sweet and quiet like, outside, but he's got a will of cast iron, and he wouldn't let nobody in the world have no way but just his, if he could help it. There's them that seem to yield, but they never do, and when they draw back, it's just for a spring, and he's one of 'em; but was he a-talking about me when he got that communication, as you call it?"

"Just wait Sam, till I recollect my recollection."

Peter put his head in his hand, and after a little, replied in the affirmative.

"What did he say of me? not that I care. I don't care what he thinks, only as it may take in others."

"Well, in the first place he said there was some fine young men in the church, and, though I can't tell his words, he put you forard of 'em all."

"Less give thanks!" says Samuel, holding up his hands.

"Give 'em for what?" says Peter.

"O things generally, but go on, what more did he say?"

"He said you was a good looking man, didn't I think so? And he liked you, he said, didn't I? And then he said, wasn't you my friend particular? to which I said yes, emphatic, you was my friend particular."

"And then what?"

"Then he sighed like, and said he was afraid you had trouble afore you, a disappointment in love, he wished you success, hearty, he said, but things looked agin you."

"Is that all?"

"Purty much, he asked if somebody had been here lately, to have their fortune told; and if it was any friend to you?"

"Ay, I understand him! and what else did he say about somebody, and somebody's fortune?"

"Well, Sam, I can't tell — not to give his words precise, but it kind o' come to me from his talk one way and another, which it was all into your favor, and into her favor that he talked of her; but no matter what come to me."

"Ah, but it is, though. What come to you?"

"Well then, Sam, it kind o' come to me that she hild herself up above you like, and that the mother of her didn't look at you level. He didn't say this 'ere, mind, it only kind o' come to me. He said he hoped for the best, and would like to serve you, and all them sort o' things that are

lovely into a man to feel for a feller man. So, Sam, don't set nothin' down agin him. If things is to be sot agin anybody I prefer 'em to be sot agin me; nothin' can harm me no furdur much than what I am harmed."

Samuel took the clumsy hand of the man in his, and said: "Cheer up, Peter! we'll be friends, you and me, come what will. I'm sorry I spoke so short to you — forget it; I don't blame you, your honest and true, and too good for your own advantage; I wish I was half as good."

"O, Sam, to think o' you a-praisin' me! Why, I feel my cheek a blushin' like a girl's to hear it."

"Before we part," says Samuel, "I must give you one word of advice; have nothin' to do with these spirits, even admitting that they are spirits."

"I'll do almost anything for you, Samuel," says Peter, solemnly, "but not that, you mustn't ask that, there's times and places where no man has a right to come between another man and his Maker, where him and his conscience, which is God's voice a-speakin' low, must just have it out between 'em! that's my doctrine, which I hold to it firm." Samuel turned and looked at Peter in astonishment, perhaps that he should think anything so clearly, and directly he went on. "Spirits are almost my only friends, Sam, and it flatters me like, for I know they see me as I am, and don't judge me by these rough and dusty garments that I'm into; I've allers thought they hampered me and hindered me, and that if I was rid o' my body I'd be more of a man. But whether this is true, or whether I'm vain, to think it, I know they help me, and fill me out like, now, why, don't you mind Sam, how I seem to be hild up by 'em!"

Samuel had remarked just this filling out and holding up, in an accession of mental force and a less stammering and more definite utterance, had noticed also, more especially when he professed to see spirits, a finer and sweeter expression of countenance, but he forbore to admit the fact, shaking his head as in contradiction of it, and so shifting the subject.

"You have put great confidence in me to-night, Peter," he says, "and in turn I will confide in you, for why should we be ashamed to speak of the purest and sweetest feelin's, we are capable of. My notion is that we ain't worthy of the natures God has give us, and we go a sneekin' and shufflin'

and blushin' and lyin', where we most ought to go above board, havin', most evidently, the Divine leadin', not boastfully nor proudly, but with reverent and solemn awe."

"Sam," says Peter, that's some preachin' spirit that's puttin' that into your head! You'd never a-thought of it, not of yourself, spirits have a way o' kind o' touchin' the keys of your mind, so to speak, and bringin' thought out like. But what was you sayin'?"

"I was sayin', or was about to say," rejoined Samuel, "that I love Margaret Fairfax with all my heart—that I desire above everything to make her my wife; to work for her, to live for her, to stand between her and harm, and if it must come, to take it on myself; to be to her hope, health, sunshine, happiness, comfort through all things; and all these I could 'a' been, but for a saintly devil that comes between us. O, Peter, it breaks my heart to think of it!"

"But maybe your a-goin' forard too fast," says Peter; "maybe it'll all turn out as you hope."

"I don't hope," says Samuel, "I know what's agin hope; I've seen it all along, and I knowed it before I knowed it, so to speak; and now it appears that not content with his own cunning, he must needs come here o' nights and seek to league himself with invisible powers. It's all plain enough, if he is called Bishop John, in the communication, and if Margaret's name hadn't 'a' been writ at all. I should 'a' felt the truth. Well, let him beware how he crosses my path—that's all!"

He was turning away, when Peter caught his hand: "You won't forget your boy's arm," he said; "you remember you are to cure it!"

"I forgot what stuff I was told," replied Samuel, in a sour fashion.

"This was it—mind every word," says Peter: "Dip your left hand in the dew three times, and pronounce the name of any one you love backwards; now you won't fail to do it?"

"Nonsense!" cries Samuel, but as he went along the mead-path, he did it, for all that.

And all that night, and all the following day, ~~his~~ heart was torn with such jealous pangs as go near driving the brain to madness; it was some comfort, to be sure, that little Peter's arm was found to be fair and white and well,

in the morning, and that Peter senior was almost happy in the thought that his two treasures, his boy and his poor old Posey, were provided for, but under this comfort, the madness worked. He laughed loud, and drank hard, and cut the sides of the sheep as he sheared them, and cut his own hands into the bargain; got mad, and threatened to whip the slenderest of the shearers because he broke raw eggs in his whiskey, and hugged another and talked fondly to him for saying he didn't like the new preacher. At last he grew grum and gruff, and swore he was the proudest and most independent man in the church, and that he could carry things with a high hand in spite of the bishop's son or anybody else. And to crown all his folly swore that Margaret Fairfax was the prettiest girl in all the world, and that he would marry her if he had a mind, in spite of her mother and the rest of them!

It was on the evening of this day, at a most unfortunate hour, as the reader knows, that Margaret came, inquiring for him. What fell out during the interview, has already been shown; why it came about, will, perhaps be more clearly understood in view of Samuel's conversation with Peter, and the coming to light of the mysterious communication addressed to Bishop John.

All this was burning like fire in his brain, and when Margaret said, "it is Mr. Lightwait — what will he think of me, with you? at this hour!" the fire ran to his fingers' ends, and his hand did what it did.

And here we reach the point at which our preceding chapter concluded, where our narrative has been all this time waiting to be taken up.

CHAPTER VII.

MRS. WHITEFLOCK SEES HERSELF AS OTHERS SEE HER.



WHEN the company, who had set out in search of Mr. Lightwait, arrived at the house of Mrs. Whiteflock, all was found to be dark and still, and it was not until repeated blows and thumps had been dealt upon doors and shutters, that any sign of life was evoked. At last, however, a sign did appear, in the shape of a woman's night-cap, at an upper window, — an apparition followed by the inquiry, "Who is there?" and this again by "What do you want this time o' night?" in a voice so irritable and angry that some dispute arose as to whether it were Mrs. Whiteflock whose night-cap had been visible.

"It wan't her!" said the cooper. "I'll bet a load o' hoop-poles onto that; why, she's as big as one o' my hogsheads. Anyhow, she looks so when she comes into meetin'!"

"You're right," says the tailor; "I see the figer of her movin' about now; it's one o' the daughters, and no more the shape o' Mrs. Whiteflock than a taller candle is the shape of a lantern."

"Much you fellers know about how a woman looks this time o' night!" says the butcher; "you're nuther of you married men, the more shame to you!"

"If Peter's life is a fair example o' you married folks," says the cooper, "I don't know but what the tother side has the advantage."

The laugh was rather against the butcher, and became decidedly so when the tailor added: "Do your wives generally have their Larkys, ha! Mr. Butcher?"

"No insinuations, if you please, gentlemen!" says Mr. Stake, the butcher, and then he says, joining in the general

chuckle, "that there is no accounting for tastes. Some folks," says he, "prefers pork to lamb, and some prefers old birds to fresh uns, you know; but for my part, barrin' Peter's foolery about sperits, he's twice the man that ever Lute Larky was, or is like to be!"

"There! there she is now; that's Miss Whiteflock herself!" exclaims the cooper; *she's* something like for size; t'other one could 'a' been put into one o' my cags!"

"T'other one!" sneers the butcher; "this and t'other is all one; you hang twenty yards or so o' stiff stuff around most any figer and it'll look big! Matty Whitelock, now, if you had the bare skeleton of her, wouldn't be no bigger than what my wife is!" Now Mrs. Whiteflock was a power in the neighborhood, and nobody thought of speaking of her as Martha Whiteflock, let alone *Matty*, nor would the butcher have thought of it, but for the insinuations he had pretended to reprove, — they had somehow put her upon a lower level.

It would have been thought a bold move in him at any other time, to compare his wife to Mrs. Whiteflock in any way, even though he was a thriving man, wore broadcloth every day, and kept his hair saturated with highly-scented marrowfat, but now, what with the general excitement, and what with the bold jesting, it was not only accepted, but received with murmurs of applause. When the cooper had exclaimed: "There she is now!" a light had been struck in Mrs. Whiteflock's chamber, and from that time she had been observed hurrying to and fro, and up and down, in a confused and agitated way, quite unlike herself. She had heard every word the men had spoken, the window being open, and the curtain thin. Her face was burning like fire, and her heart beating as it had never beaten till then. Shame, fright, pride, and humiliation were all aroused and making wild contention in her hitherto placid bosom. She could not find her comb; she could not find her slippers, nor her shawl, nor anything, and remained in demi-toilet, and out of speaking distance so long, that the men in waiting grew impatient.

"If you're on such good terms with madam, such wery good terms," says the cooper, joggng the elbow of the butcher, "s'pose you just tip her the wink to weil herself a little, and come to the winder."

"I didn't say nothing about good or bad terms! I know her when I see her; I know a sheep whether it's got the wool onto its back or whether it's sheared, I reckon!" The favor with which he of the scented marrow had been regarded already, became more pronounced now, and he was requested to act as foreman.

"Hello there!" he calls, making a trumpet of his double hand; "s'pose, mem, you just send your man, Luther, down here." It was not, perhaps, so much the words as the tone, that made the blood tingle in the woman's finger-ends. Her first impulse was to fling back an open insult; but alas for the woman that feels herself in the power of an inferior! She did no such thing; she dared not.

"Do you mean Mr. Larky?" she says, speaking so low and so soft that her voice might have been mistaken for that of a turtle, cooing to its mate. She had come to the window, but the folds of the divided curtain were so closely held together that only the tip of her nose was visible.

"Yes 'em, exactly; Mr. Larky, Mr. Luther Larky, your man. I beg your pardon if I offended you by calling him Luther," answers the butcher.

He had said too much now, and the face burned as if it would set the curtain on fire, and the voice almost trembled that replied, "No offence, brother Stake, none in the world; what is it to me, to be sure, whether you say Luther or Mr. Larky! I didn't quite understand, that was all."

The butcher was flattered; she had called him *brother Stake*, and they had all heard it, though he was not fairly entitled to the appellation, not being a member of the church, and he straightway put his request in a less objectionable shape: "If you please, mem," says he, "will you send Mr. Larky down to us?"

"I don't know, indeed, whether he is in," says Mrs. Whiteflock, and she adds, quite unnecessarily, "you might almost as well ask for him at the other end of the town, I know so little of his whereabouts." She laughed a little laugh that was foolish and feigned, and then she said, quite naturally, that she would send Samuel Dale to them.

A burst of merriment followed this offer, which not being in the least understood by Mrs. Whiteflock, still further disconcerted her.

"And you don't know whether Mr. Larky is at home?" persists the butcher.

"Well, no, brother Stake, that is, if you call this his *home*! We never think of calling our house the *home* of anybody but ourselves, — my husband and me."

"Then, mem, is Peter at home?" says the butcher.

"O yes, my husband is always at home of nights;" and she looks around as if toward the bed, and then adds, "he is sleeping, poor dear, I don't like to call him." And then she asks if she can't stand in his stead for this once; she can't do it very well, she feels, but she is willing to do her best, for she really can't find it in her heart to wake her tired husband.

"What we want to know is this," says the butcher.

"You ought to werify her," interposes the cooper, "that every word she advances'll be reperduced into court."

"Mercy on me!" cries Mrs. Whiteflock, with a little scream, and even the tip of her nose disappears within the curtain.

"You ought to swear her onto the Book," continues the cooper; "testimony won't awail into the court if it ain't took werbatim, and took with due form!"

"Due thunder!" answers the butcher; "that wouldn't be no sense." He had the "*brother*" to presume upon now, as well as the marrowfat.

"Do you pertend you understand the dead languages?" says the cooper. "Well, if you don't, my advice is that the further examination of the witness now in the box be procrastinated to a more conwenient season."

"Lord 'a' mercy!" cries Mrs. Whiteflock, her nose just appearing again through the curtain; "what have I to answer for? I never meant to harm anybody, I can say that; and you can swear me to it if you want to!"

"Dear Mrs. Whiteflock," says the butcher, "pray don't be alarmed; we are all friends, and there is no harm coming to you; this blundering fellow ought to be punished for giving you such a fright."

"I only said," pleaded the cooper, "that her evidence ought to be took werbatim while she was into the box. I don't see no scare about that!"

"Box!" says the butcher; "what do you mean?"

"I mean, your honor, the witness aforesaid, into the box aforesaid, and now onto the stand aforesaid!"

"Good gracious! What's the fellow up to?" cries some one in the crowd.

"Up to!" echoes the cooper; "I'm up to being on the safe side; that's what I'm up to. Blood has been spilt to-night; the peaceful grass has been incarsadined; our homes and our hearths have been violated, and our women and children have been torn from their unhallowed beds at the dead of midnight hour, to answer at the bar of justice and on their woracity, as to the whereabouts of the unhappy dead; and it's wisionary, gentlemen, to suppose, for a single moment, that our percedings here will be walid unless done according to the advice of some client learned in the law! I move, therefore, and second the motion, and put it to wote, whether the witness now pending in the box shan't be sworn before her evidence be took, lest our percedings shall be rendered woid, and not only so, but in wiolation of the common principles of liberty, for which our fathers wentered their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honors!"

This unexpected burst produced a marked impression on the crowd, and a few discontents drew off, but the butcher won the rest more completely by remarking that the meaning was the thing of import, and not the word at all; "for instance," says he, "it's all one whether I call the cooper an ass or a man!"

"He's used to knockin' on the head," muttered some one who took sides with the cooper; but before any very bitter partisan feeling had been engendered, the common attention was diverted by the opening of the entry door, and the appearance of Mrs. Whiteflock herself, radiant with excitement, and imposing with her accustomed amplitude of dimensions. "Do tell me all about the dreadful affair, gentlemen," she says, leading the way into the best room. She had caught the idea that blood had been spilt, from the fierce declamation of the cooper, and from that moment a great weight had been lifted from her soul; murder seemed a trivial thing just then.

"What!" cry two or three at once, "is it possible you don't know about Mr. Lightwait's being shot, — shot by Sam Dale?"

This news was indeed shocking, but she did not scream, nor throw up her hands, but on the contrary, suppressed all

signs of sudden emotion, and answered, naturally, that she was ignorant of the dreadful particulars.

"But Peter knows all about it; he was sent for?"

"Yes, to be sure, but I wouldn't allow him to talk about it; you know his extreme sensitiveness, and peculiarly unfortunate liabilities under any over-excitement."

Then she put her handkerchief to her eyes, and having recovered herself a little, went on in a faltering voice — "Of course I try to guard and protect him all I can, and to tell the truth, I diverted his mind from the horrid tragedy as soon as possible, and under the influence of my foolish prattle, which was all against my feelings, the dear knows, he fell asleep directly."

"O Mrs. Whiteflock," cried two or three voices, "your conversation, foolish to be sure, — what an idea!" She laughed deprecatingly, and brought forth a bottle of old peach brandy, — "Some that I have always kept since our wedding day," she says; "do taste it, gentlemen, one and all, the night air and the excitement will bring on ague fits else; and didn't my poor dear husband almost die of them? La mercy! the way I've tended him night and day, month in and month out, for them nasty chills! why, it makes me shudder to think of it, — pass the bottle round! a body's wedding day doesn't come twice, you know, gentlemen, and you won't be likely to taste such brandy again, if I do say it myself; I declare the peach flavor is quite perfect; it's my husband's favorite tipple, if I may use such a vulgar word!" She laughed, and poured a little more of the brandy into her glass; and all the company laughed and took a little more too; she was so sociable and genial, they were all delighted, and quite forgetting the errand that had brought them. "It does me good to see you drink," she says; "I've always had such a terror of that dreadful ague ever since my poor, dear husband; would you believe, brethren, he took no end of quinine, but the doctor always would have it it was the nursing that did it! La me, he used to say to me almost every day, the doctor did, 'Mrs. Whiteflock, I shouldn't mind to be sick myself, if I could only have such a nurse as you are,' but, dear me, when a husband comes to be sick, a wife feels that there is nothing that she couldn't do, — I know it was so with me, anyhow; but I suppose I've got the best man in the world, — always

excepting present company, you know!" She smiled and nodded all round, and every man present felt as if he was personally complimented, and gave hearty laughter in return for her smile, and sipped his brandy with an added degree of gusto.

Men are easily imposed upon by the artifices of woman; (they do not deceive one another so readily,) and not a man who sipped the brandy but was ready to swear directly that Mrs. Whiteflock was not only the best woman, but also the kindest and most affectionate wife in the world.

By little and little she drew the story all out without betraying her ignorance, for all were eager to tell it, eager to do anything that would oblige so charming a woman, and the clearest-sighted of them all did not suspect that he was being led by one wholly blind. Such was the case nevertheless. As it happened Mrs. Whiteflock had gone to bed at an unusually early hour that night, and consequently knew nothing of what had chanced, till the midnight calling beneath her window had aroused her, but what she heard while dressing, startled her, not out of her propriety, but into it, and caused her to hold and to keep fast to Peter, as she had never done before. She had incidentally learned that he knew all about the affair, hence the necessity of seeming to know, on her part.

"Do you happen to know, Mrs. Whiteflock," says the butcher, "whether the unfortunate man was in — was down — was at — do you happen to know — that is, can you tell whether the unfortunate man was any time during the past evening in — a-t' — he stammered, coughed, and broke down. He had undertaken to ask, simply, whether Mr. Lightwait had been in Peter's cellar any time during the past evening, but somehow, he did not feel free to say Peter and cellar, as he had always done before.

Here Mrs. Whiteflock came in with a long story about a dispute she had had lately with her husband, ("the dear man has such strange, old-fashioned notions, you know," she says,) all concerning the color of a new coat she was persuading him to buy; and she made it appear that it had been quite a playful love-quarrel, made up with kisses, belike, and when she had finished the story, she said she would like to take the vote of her good friends as to the most becoming color for the proposed garment! "I am fully determined,

whether we agree on one color or not," she says, "that the dear man shall never be seen again in that horrid thing he wears!" And then she says her husband is much less worldly-minded than she, much better than she, every way; she wishes she were only half as good!

"O Mrs. Whiteflock!" cry all her friends in a breath, and then they fall to praising her Christian virtues, and then she says they think too well of her, she only wishes she deserved their good opinions, and in this way she convinces them that she is not only very good, but sweetly and beautifully meek, withal.

When all this had been interpolated, and the butcher got back again to the question upon which he had broken down, he went through without a hitch, the wheels of his mental machinery being by this time, what with brandy, and what with Mrs. Whiteflock's open and insinuated flatteries, scarcely less oily than his hair. "Do you happen to know, Sister Whiteflock," he said, (he had never ventured to address her as sister before,) "do you happen to know whether the unfortunate man," he had heard the doctor say that, "was at your husband's office any time during the last evening?"

Mrs. Whiteflock said she thought not, and then she said she thought he was, and then she said she didn't know, her husband had not mentioned it, but then he might not have thought of it; so, conveying the impression that the bishop's son was an intimate and frequent visitor in the office, and thereby adding considerably to the consideration of poor Peter, whose brain, if he could have heard it, must have been more pitifully confused than ever.

After the butcher's example, everybody, in addressing Mrs. Whiteflock said, your husband, and Mr. Whiteflock, and she almost blushed to hear him thus honorably mentioned, and just the smallest tendril of the affection she had pretended to cherish for him took root in her heart.

Another strange thing happened during the stay of these visitors; a root that had struck in her girl's fancy, and held its own for years, was loosened somewhat; the consideration given to Peter took just so much from Luther, and when the men began to say Mr. Whiteflock, and your husband, they also began to say Luther, and Larky, and even Lute Larky! All this went to the conscience of the woman, and

there gathered over her a weight of responsibility that she could in no wise get away from. She kept up a pretty prattle of delightful nothings, together with a comfortable pressure of hospitality till the company departed, giving to each guest as he shook hands with her, the assurance that she felt herself specially obliged to him for disturbing her sleep, and drinking her brandy; not in so many words was this assurance conveyed; not by anything that can be repeated, perhaps; nevertheless, it was said as plainly as words could have said it, and the cordial expressions of good-will, and every "God bless you," given back, assured her that her reputation, for the time being, at least, was washed clean of all suspicion.

She did not exult in this success. She had never been at heart a bad woman. She had been thoughtless, careless, selfish, and wilful, and she had been petted and humored and encouraged in her natural complacency by those who surrounded her, for her table glittered with silver; her house was big, and in the splendor of her personal adornment she outshone the lily of the field, that she also rivaled in another respect; she toiled not, neither did she spin. She was ambitious in many ways, ambitious of being rich; hence she had married Peter Whiteflock; the world had forgiven her long ago. She had carried it with so high a hand, had so completely monopolized the money, and so positively ignored the man, that the thing had come to be looked upon with almost a sort of admiration. She was ambitious of social distinction, and the travelling preachers "put up" with her, and all distinguished visitors to the neighborhood dined and supped with her, tasted her brandy, and her grapes and strawberries. The young ladies got their holiday and bridal flowers in her garden, got their new patterns for corsets and capes of her, and their receipts for custards and cakes. She was ambitious of religious distinction, and love-feasts and sewing circles and missionary meetings were often held at her house; but underlying all her ambition, there was an affluence of nature that would have won friends to her, even without the powerful accessories possessed by her.

The world had forgiven her marriage, but she had never forgiven herself, or rather, she had never forgiven Peter for marrying her, and perhaps it was as much to defy and override him, as anything else, that she took his old rival into her employment, and under her roof.

She had certainly never seen the affair in the light in which she might have seen it, if she had not been in the habit of arrogating to herself extraordinary privileges, and of having them accorded without question or hesitation. She had once been what girls in their teens call *in love*, with Luther Larky, and though she had long been aware of his moral deficiencies, she had continued to cherish him with that blind perversity which so inheres in the heart of woman. The inquiry for him at her chamber window at midnight, had jostled her out of the socket in which she had been indolently sunken for years, and when the door closed upon her visitors, and she turned back into her house, the fictitious vivacity forsook her, and as she sunk down, all of a heap, the turbulent wave she had been holding back, swept quite over her. It was some comfort, to be sure, that the gross jests she had heard from the window were not likely to be repeated, but at what cost of self-respect had she warded off this calamity! She had ignored the bitter facts, and come down from her accustomed place in society, as well as down from her chamber; opened her house, even her best room, and admitted, at midnight, a set of coarse fellows, some of whom she scarcely knew, on terms of social equality, and to a freedom of intercourse, only hitherto accorded to her old and esteemed friends. She had even bandied jests and drank brandy with them, with the implied understanding that she felt herself privileged! She scorned herself, and writhing under the memory of such low tricks, the thought of him who had caused them made her almost loathe him too.

It was as if the glass through which she had been used to see him darkly, was broken up, and she beheld him face to face, in all his lowness and unworthiness. The clock struck one, and two; the candle on the table burned dim, and still she sat, her face buried in her arms, and her hair falling about her eyes and making the darkness double, when a little sound, like the rustle of a soft garment near her, startled and caused her to look up. The tears stopped just where they were, and the heart stopped too. At the further side of the room, making it light all round her with a radiance that seemed to flow from herself, stood a woman, beautiful beyond the power of fancy to paint. By her side, and with her veil floating across his shoulder and caressing him, as it were, stood Peter, beautified, spiritualized, transfigured from earthiness to glory.

She could hardly have said they were there till they were gone, floating as lightly away as the thistle down, and vanishing like the shapes of a dream, yet leaving a picture, distinct, and ineffaceable, upon her mind.

As she saw the vision departing, she rose to her feet, crying, with outstretched arms, "My husband." And this was the first time that word had ever been prompted by her heart. He smiled, as in benediction, sorrowfully, waved his hand in farewell, and with the heavenly veil shimmering between his face and hers, vanished out of sight.

Her empty, aching heart felt itself mocked and baffled, and a pang of jealousy shot through it, such as she had never experienced before in all her life; a feeling that grew upon her rather than decreased, afterward, and for this reason in part: when the hand that seemed Peter's had been waved in farewell, she had noticed something bright fall from it to the ground, and had afterwards found on the spot where it had seemed to strike, her own wedding ring, which she had given back to Peter the day after her marriage.

She found this, searching about with the dim candle; then she trimmed the light, and having slipped the ring on her finger, and being impelled by a motive, strange, and solemn, and irresistible, descended to the cellar where Peter, with his boy in his arms, lay fast asleep. The ring, always there before, was gone from his hand, and there was on his face, or she fancied there was, something of the radiance that had glorified the vision. She would gladly have put the hair away from his forehead and kissed him, but she feared to wake him, and, besides, something seemed to withhold her, and so, having silently invoked a blessing, she stole softly away. She had not realized till now how dismal and forbidding the cellar was; the rats had scampered away at her entrance, and she had afterwards seen them looking at her from the dim corners of the room—seen their white teeth glistening or their black, hairless tails wriggling out of their holes, and the impression left on her mind, softened as it was, just then, was like an impression cast in wax.

The candle had long burned out on her table and the latest of the golden candles along the sky was growing pale in the gray light of the morning, when with a restless and perturbed spirit in her bosom she reascended the stairs to

her chamber, changed from her former self, as one sometimes is changed all at once, by some great calamity, or by sickness, unto death, or by powerful spiritual excitement. She had, in truth, got a new heart. At the upper landing she encountered Luther Larky, frowzy, frowning, and half dressed. "You up so early, Marther!" he exclaimed, with some displeasure mingled with the reproof of his tone, carelessly or purposely digging his elbows in her, as he tossed his jacket over his head.

"I hope I have a right to get up in my own house, without asking leave of anybody, at whatever hour I please." And Mrs. Whiteflock would have passed on, but he detained her by a grab upon the arm, meant to be familiar and fond. She flung off the hand with such violence as made him stare. "What's up!" he demanded; "Peter hain't kicked out o' the traces nor nothin', I reckon!" And then taking a coaxing tone and pulling at her sleeve, he added,— "Come, spell it out, whatever it is. I've got a right for to know it. Say, Marther!"

Whatever he might have done at another time, it was certainly not just then that he could talk about rights. He had always called her Marther, to be sure, but somehow it grated upon her ear with a terrible unpleasantness just now, and she answered with freezing coldness, that she would like to know where he got the rights he boasted of.

"I'll just remind you, then," he said, "bein' as your mem'ry seems to fail ye, that I got 'em o' Marther Hansom. She give me the right to her hand and her heart, and though she took one away, she never took the tother, so far as I've understood, nor so far as has been understood by people generally. Are all these years to go for nothing? Actions speaks louder'n words, Marther."

"What has been generally understood, isn't here nor there!" retorted Mrs. Whiteflock, feeling all the while that it was both here and there, "and if my actions have spoken contrary to my words, I don't know it!"

This, it must be admitted, was a little stretch of the honest truth, but perhaps Mrs. Whiteflock was not at the moment conscious of it, and indeed, it is difficult for any of us to give the justest evidence against ourselves. We must needs make good our case, first of all.

"You're in one of your tantrums," says Luther; "all

women has 'em ; you'll git over it and be all right agin. I can afford to wait, I reckon — only I'd just like to know what's up with you ! ”

He had a long snaky body, and while he was speaking, stooped, with his back toward her, to tie his shoe, and as he concluded his remarks, thus stooping, grinned at her, looking upward from between his legs.

She almost hated him at that moment. She made a quick angry gesture with all her body, then drew herself up and said haughtily, “ Whatever you have understood, Mr. Larky, I give you to understand now, plainly and once for all, that you are no more to me than any of my other hired servants ! And now, sir, I hope you are in no doubt. ”

“ Whew ! ” whistled Luther. “ Golly ! how my lady's a-comin' out ! ” And then he said, as she stood flushing and dilating with indignation, “ true, I'll be dog-on Marther, if you ever looked half so handsome ! ”

“ Call me Mrs. Whiteflock, if you please, sir, when you have occasion to speak to me after this ! ”

“ Certing ! anything you likes, my little dear ; you pays your money, and you has your choice ; I'll even say Mrs. Peter Whiteflock, if you like the sound of it, or Mother Whiteflock ; that last 'ill be singularly appropriate, as betwixt you and me ! ”

“ More appropriate than you can understand, for a reason that is not altogether your fault, for if ever I cared for you with any other feeling than such as the mother gives to her deformed child, it has certainly not been for years and years ! ”

“ Ain't you pilin' it up a leetle steep, Marther ? you better just hold on, mind I tell ye ! You won't find another Peter in me, not by a long shot ! I've been master about these diggins a leetle too long for to be talked to that way all of a sudden ! ” And bowing with mock courtesy, and the exclamation, “ Your most obedient ! ” he backed himself off the landing.

Mrs. Whiteflock's eyes followed him down the stairs with a look of slow, settled scorn, that was more to be feared than all her angry words.

She entered her chamber with a quiet step, closed the door softly, and with folded arms and downcast eyes, stood a good while leaning against it ; then she turned the key,

and having opened one of the drawers of her bureau in which were kept certain mementoes of her girlhood, selected from among them two or three trinkets given her by Luther in the days of their courtship, together with several crumpled love-letters, in faded ink and yellow paper. She turned and overturned the contents of the drawer again and again, as if to assure herself positively that nothing was left, and then placing the selected articles in a little heap on the hearth-stone, set fire to them, and as they slowly consumed, watch the smoke of their burning with a sort of grim satisfaction. When the feeble blue blaze flickered out and nothing was left but a handful of flaky ashes, she brushed them away, with a deep sigh of relief, and having filled a china basin from a pitcher of rain-water that stood on the toilet table she proceeded to wash her hands, rubbing them hard, and plunging them deep in the water, time after time, and though they were white almost as the toilet cloth, she examined them repeatedly with a questioning, dissatisfied look, not unlike that which one may suppose Lady Macbeth to have worn when she said, "What, will these hands never be clean?" and "Out damned spot!"

She dressed her hair without once looking in the glass, and, as the rising sun illumined her windows, fell upon her knees and prayed long and fervently. It was not the formula of words that she had been used to say; her heart and all that was within her was crying and calling as they never had done before, and whatever the words she used, the substance was, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner."

Alas for those who have no faith to pray, who when they lose hope in themselves, lose hope in everything. The Divine blessing came down to her, as it always will come to those who devoutly seek, but she wisely forebore to trust alone to contrition and tears, and courageously resolved not to return again and again in morbid brooding to the things that could not be helped, but the rather to put her hand resolutely to good works — works that should be meet for repentance.

Her first duty was to visit Samuel Dale, and before she had broken fast she set out; he was accused, forsaken, perhaps guilty. She must not desert him. She had no need to inquire where he was; a stream of men, boys, women and children pouring in one direction assured her that she

should find him directly by joining the procession, nor was she mistaken. The tide turned from the main street presently, and gathering strength as it advanced, poured and rolled and tumbled through cross-streets and by-ways and alleys, and finally on the middle of a bare common stopped, and lay surging and heaving like a troubled water, about a long, low wooden shed where the butcher's shambles were. The residents of no private dwelling house in the village were willing to admit the criminal within its walls, and he had therefore been placed in the loft of the butcher's shed, among the starving calves and sheep. From the open windows of this loft, or from such of them as were not filled with human beings, the dull, leaden eyes of these famishing creatures looked out, and all the air was filled with their cries and moans. It was enough to touch the hardest heart to see and to hear, one would have thought, but so far from this being the case, it seemed rather to stir up the more base and devilish feelings in the surrounding mob. Boys amused themselves by throwing stones at the drooping and helpless beasts thus exposed, and men talked of cutting throats and knocking on the head, of imprisonments and hangings and tortures, with a delectation that was alike disgusting and shocking to the new comer, who found herself obliged to listen, the stairway leading to the loft being already blackened and literally overflowing with human beings.

"Here's good eatin' for you," says one, poking his horny fingers into the haunch of a fat bullock that stood, tied by the neck to a strong post, against which a bloody axe was leaned, chewing the cud and waiting his turn in happy unconsciousness.

"When they goin' to kill him? how? where?" cried a dozen eager voices, as a shock-headed, bare-armed fellow appeared, with a butcher-knife stuck in his belt, and trowsers bedabbled with red spots, and, tossing the axe over his shoulder, untied the bullock and led him away. Then the air was rent with wild huzzas, hats went up, and sharp elbows dug their way along, and long legs flew, and short legs waddled, so that nearly half the crowd was drawn off after the doomed animal that was to make them a holiday before he made them a feast.

Dogs were set upon one another, and if an ear happened

to be munched or slitted, a tooth knocked out, or a joint dislocated, the enjoyment of the spectators knew no bounds; and several cats were caught and ducked in the stagnant, reddish-looking pools that stood here and there, in order to render expression more completely adequate.

Ropes were tossed up to the windows, with cries of "We want to see these ere stretched! we do! Give us a sight of him, anyhow! Hope he slep' good las' night! Ask him how he liked his bed-fellows! Has he got irons onto him? say, tell us that! Has he had his bread and water yet? Come now, 'tain't fair to us chaps that can't see. Some o' you that have been lookin' at him for half an hour might stick your face out and tell a body!"

"If any man here has any authority," says Mrs. Whiteflock, "I should like to find him!"

"I have!" says Luther Larky, stepping up to her, "and let me just tell you this is no place for you; you'd better go home!"

She looked at him with a degree of indignant scorn that no words could have expressed. Such assumption before such a rabble was insupportable, and caused the last scales, if indeed any yet remained, to fall from her eyes.

"You had better return yourself," she said, "and set about the work you are hired to do, else your discharge may come when you least expect it!"

"Indeed!" replied Luther, the tone and manner implying that to be turned off by her, was not in the least a catastrophe to be apprehended. That short word probably sealed his doom.

CHAPTER VIII.

SAMUEL IN THE BUTCHER'S LOFT.



SHARP, quickly-stifed bellow, followed by a wild shout, caused another diversion in the mob; some of the men and boys that crowded the stair, tumbling down almost headlong, and by this means Mrs. Whiteflock was enabled to gain admission to the prisoner's room. She found him lying on a bundle of straw, surrounded by idle and gaping strangers, his feet tied so that he could not stand, and his hands chained a little apart, so that with some inconvenience he could partially use them.

"Ha, sir! look up here!" cried the constable, kicking the hat, that concealed his eyes and part of his face, aside with his foot; "ha, sir! A lady, sir! And she does you more honor than you deserve! Gentlemen, stand back!" Then he warned Mrs. Whiteflock that no private conversation with the prisoner could be allowed, and so, with an uplifted bludgeon in his hand, and making a footstool of a lamb that lay tied, neck and heels, at his feet, he planted himself between the prostrate man and his visitor.

"I have nothing to say that you cannot all hear if you choose," Mrs. Whiteflock said, dropping on her knees and taking the hands of Samuel up in hers. The clanking of the chain, as she took the hands, seemed to smite upon the fountain of her tears, and they fell fast and bright till all the uplifted face and tangled beard glistened with them.

"O, my friend!" Samuel said at last, sitting up on the straw, his lip trembling, and his eyes with difficulty keeping themselves dry. The unexpected show of sympathy almost overcame him.

"It is not true! this dreadful deed that they accuse you

of?" Mrs. Whiteflock asked, dropping her eyes, for she feared to look in his.

Samuel drew his hands away from her tender caressing, and with a strong effort gathered himself up, as it were, and then with a steady voice answered that it was true, and that he had only done what he would do again.

"No, no! this is not, cannot, must not be true! You with whom I have eaten and drunken; you with whom I have prayed and fasted, tell me, O, tell me, that it is all a horrid dream; a dreadful delusion!" She had seized his hand again, and turning it from one side to the other, gazed on it, and in it, as though she expected to detect the guilty spot, if it were there.

Samuel shook his head and smiled mournfully. "You will not find it there, the spot is in my soul."

"O, don't Samuel; don't say so. I will defend you even against yourself; there is some dreadful delusion; your brain is turned; some one call the doctor!"

"Look at me," Samuel said; "I am not mad. I know what I say. I shot him through the heart, as I hope, and that was merciful compared to what he had done to me; he had already stabbed me through the heart, and murdered all my peace. Let them do what they will with me, it is no matter; I have no wish to live." Then he told her that she had better go away, that she could do him no good, and would only bring harm upon herself, by giving him sympathy, or even pity.

"If all be true as you say, which I do not yet believe," Mrs. Whiteflock answered, "I will not even then forsake you. Who shall say but that, admitting the worst, more guilt may be stretched along unsuspected lives, than you have crowded into one rash moment! Only He who made us can judge us righteously, and still you are my brother."

"What! in ignominy! in chains! in prison!" cried Samuel, hiding his face in his shackled hands, and shaking from head to foot with a storm of passion. Then he said, returning the pressure of her hand, "I wish I could tell you just how it all was, but no matter, it would do no good, they are all too much against me, it is not as it seems, that is all, but you could better afford to call me brother if you knew."

"I can afford it as it is," she answered; "Yes, my

brother still — on the gallows if you go there." And she lifted the toil-worn and chain-chafed hands to her lips and kissed them.

Perhaps she was thinking of Peter, and of her life-long neglect of him.

Murmurs of dissent and disapprobation ran through the crowd. Some said she was the worse of the two; some that she knew more about it than she pretended; and one and all, that they would not have believed such a thing of Mrs. Whiteflock, if they had not seen it with their own eyes. Her glossy silk, however, shed off a great deal of the obloquy, and the murmur bore much less heavily against her than it would have done if her shawl had been less elegant.

These were advantages, however, upon which it is not likely that she calculated just then, and let us not under-value, on account of them, her womanly courage and constancy; there had not been equality in their positions at any time, much less was there now. She was the rich mistress, he the poor hireling, at the best of times; but now there was the length and breadth of the world between her smooth brow and shining hair, and his furrowed forehead and matted locks stuck full of broken straws; between her fine boots with their silken laces and knots of ribbon, and his clumsy shoes reeking from the ominous pools through which they had trodden; between her cuff of exquisite lace, and his coarse shirt-sleeve; the soft, bright ribbon at her throat, and his rumpled and buttonless collar; her dainty hands, and his hard ones, with their broken and bruised nails.

Ay, it was a long way from the summit of her respectable prosperity to the dark, low place of shame and humiliation into which he was come, where only the light of mercy and pity could follow him.

The little murmur of dissent and disapprobation was still running up and down, when all at once the noise without became tumultuous, with exclamations of consternation, doubt, surprise, incredulity, — wonder and terror rising over all.

"God bless us! The Lord help us! Where did you come from? Are you alive? and wasn't you shot, after all? Stand back! Make way! Well I never! 'Tain't him! Yes, 'tis! No, 'tain't!" were a few of the ex-

clamations. Then the surging waves parted, and smiling, sleek, flushed, to be sure, to the faintest rose-leaf shade, but all composed and elegant, John Hamlyn Lightwait, leaving the gaping crowd behind him, ascended the rickety stairs, entered the cattle loft, and shaking out his scented pocket-handkerchief wiped his brow.

A silence like the silence of the grave followed the first noisy tumult, many, no doubt, really believing they had seen a ghost, and not a man, and the general feeling among those who were not deceived, it must be owned, being one of disappointment. Sam wasn't a murderer, then, after all, and the hanging they had hoped to witness would never come to pass! Those who had coils of rope in their hands, hid them under their coat-skirts, and sneaked away, and the late loud exhilaration took a low, bitter and brooding turn.

"Is it possible, Sister Whiteflock, is it possible I find you here at this unconscionably early hour? Why, it has been as much as I could accomplish." And Mr. Lightwait took out his gold repeater and looked at it indolently, and then he lifted his sleepy eyes, and smiled and nodded to the by-standers.

The tone of his remark had not pleased Mrs. Whiteflock; it had seemed to imply some impropriety on her part, and she was peculiarly sensitive just then. Her reply, therefore, was quite devoid of her accustomed graciousness of manner, insomuch that everybody who heard, stared upon her with wonder and surprise.

"Where should I be, but here?" she said, still retaining the hand of Samuel; and then with great intrepidity, "One would suppose that you, being unscathed as it seems you are, might have found your way here before this time, and so have relieved my friend from the false charges under which he has suffered quite too long, in my opinion; so you see Brother Lightwait, that you have surprised me, no less than I you!"

She smiled as she concluded, and most of those who heard it, smiled too, feeling that she had the best of it, but the day past she would no more have spoken thus to her preacher, and he a bishop's son, withal, than she would have cut off her right hand. New experiences had brought out new traits — traits that she had never herself suspected.

It was Mr. Lightwait's turn now to be gracious, and he lost no time; he had only feared, he said, that she had overtaxed herself, for, alas! the weakness of the flesh must needs fall short of the willingness of the spirit, when the spirit was so zealous of good works, in season and out of season, as was hers. He wished they had a few more Sister Whiteflocks in Bloomington! not that he could complain of anybody, far from it; indeed the church was especially blessed in the excellence and efficacy of its female members.

Mrs. Whiteflock thanked him with quite a worldly air and manner, that seemed to say she did not estimate his compliment at more than the worth of a compliment, and then she went on to say she need hardly ask if he had himself suffered from all the unhappy confusion, as his fresh appearance and equable mood forbade any such inquiry.

"By George, she's a trump!" whispered one on the outside of the circle, to his neighbor, and a little stir and murmur of delight ran through the crowd; it was as if the lion had been bearded in his den, or some other daring feat performed, and as daring, no matter of what nature, always wins admiration, Mrs. Whiteflock began to find herself the pointed object of proud and favoring regard. What her glossy silk and fine laces and soft ribbons had left undone, her spirited contest with the bishop's son was perfecting, and through her influence a strong tide was setting in Samuel's favor; one stout fellow had even got out his jack-knife and was about to cut the rope that was twisted around the legs of the prisoner, and tied with knot upon knot.

"Not so hasty, my good friend!" said Mr. Lightwait, almost tumbling the fellow over with a little wave of his white hand; and then turning to Mrs. Whiteflock he said, "I should certainly deserve your implied rebuke, my dear sister, if I had had the knowledge of this unfortunate business which you seem to attribute to me, but it so happened that my movements last evening precluded me from learning what it seems everybody else knew, and indeed I remained in total and blind ignorance until within this half hour; I trust, therefore, you will take from me the ban of your displeasure." He then said he hoped the derangement of mind under which their poor friend was laboring, would prove to be of a transient and remediable character. He touched Samuel caressingly on the shoulder as he spoke, and asked him in considerate and soothing tones if he knew him!

Samuel, who had been glowering upon him from under scowling eyebrows, replied haughtily that he did know him very well.

Mrs. Whiteflock smiled and nodded all around, as much as to say; "I told you so, he's all right, don't you see!"

"Ontie him! Knock off his chains! it's all devilish nonsense, and I said so from the first!" cried a voice from the crowd.

"So did I, so did I!" chimed in two or three others.

Another little wave of the white hand, and the crowd swayed and staggered back as though a battering-ram had been brought to bear upon them. "Insanity is a strange disease, my friends," said Mr. Lightwait, "and has the trick of seeming quite sane sometimes." Then he related some curious instances illustrative of that theory, and showing how dangerous it was to trust to the lucid intervals, and then turning to Samuel as if to point his moral, he addressed him in accents as soft and persuasive as one might use in speaking to a wild beast he sought to tame.

"So you think you know me, do you, my good Brother Dale?" he said.

Probably his object was to provoke Samuel into the saying of some outrageous thing, or the doing of some dreadful deed of which he might take advantage, but the devil always knows his own, and helps them in ways beyond all mortal cunning to contrive; such unexpected help came to the bishop's son at this juncture, Samuel being condemned out of his own mouth. "Know you?" he cried, in a perfect frenzy of madness, "God-a-mercy, I know you better than you think! You're Bishop John! and your mother's name was Betsey Honeywell! You see, sir, I know your tribe, both in the body and out o' the body! I'm only sorry my aim wasn't surer; as it is, I suppose the communication will be lost upon you, and the butterfly will not long be left among the flowers!"

Mr. Lightwait shook his head and smiled pitifully as though he would say, "You all see how it is with him! Just such another case as I was telling you of!" Then he asked if some one would not fetch Dr. Allprice. "Poor fellow!" he soliloquized: "we must do what we can for him, but I fear, I greatly fear." He tapped his fingers lightly on his forehead, and turned away, quite overcome, as it appeared.

The folds of Mrs. Whiteflock's elegant shawl shook a little over her left arm, and the fellow who had got out the jack-knife slipt it slyly into his pocket and got himself out of sight.

"Crazy as a bedbug! I know'd it! I said so all the time," cried a dozen voices at once. Mr. Lightwait leaned against a post, and continued from time to time mournfully to shake his head. The color in his cheek had not changed one tint when Samuel had called him Bishop John, nor yet when he had spoken the maiden name of his mother, for though by the pronouncing of these two names he had been given to understand the whole nature and animus of the case, he was too adroit to make any outward sign; for he comprehended, too, on the instant, how easily and naturally this to him strong proof of sanity on the part of Samuel could be turned to his most serious damage, no one but himself comprehending it in the least; and, as will readily be seen, it showed on the face but as the gabble of a crazy man or a fool.

Samuel might, if he entered into further conversation with him, explain himself, and annul all that had been gained; Mr. Lightwait therefore not only refrained from conversing further with him, but at the same time discouraged all attempts to do so on the part of others. He looked out anxiously for Doctor Allprice, and professed great faith in his scientific knowledge and skill. Besides, he had a strong inkling of what the judgment of the little-great man would be; more especially with his leading.

Meantime, rumors of Samuel's absolute wildness began to circulate, and his enigmatical talk with Mr. Lightwait was reported with serious exaggerations and additions. "What was it he called the preacher? what was it? did anybody hear? let the feller slop out, that knows! dog-on, tain't fair to keep us outsiders in suspense! make him say it ag'in, somebody!" were a few of the comments, exclamations and inquiries that ran up and down.

At last, some one whose curiosity was irrepressible, pulled Mr. Lightwait by the sleeve with the interrogation, "What was it he called you, sir, if I mought be so bold?" "He called me Bishop Wrenn, or some such name, I believe," he replied quietly.

Samuel, who had thrown himself back on his sorry bed,

and covered his eyes with his arm, roused up on his elbow at this, his chains clanking as he did so, and shaking one finger at the clergyman, exclaimed with terrible earnestness, "You lie, sir, in your throat and in your heart, and you know it, and God knows it! I called you Bishop John, as you well understood, and your own guilty conscience has made you substitute another name, though nobody here except yourself would or could see the difference. I dare you, sir, to lift up your hand and say that you either believe me crazy or that you have not perfectly understood every word I have spoke! I didn't mean to be understood by everybody; I meant to show you some mercy; but, by the Lord, I shan't hold back much longer if you go on in this way. Why, I fairly begin to think there's no truth in you."

He fell back again, the sweat standing in drops along his forehead, and his lips trembling and colorless.

"A fit, I fear," whispered Mr. Lightwail to his nearest neighbor, and then he said something about the unfortunate delay of Dr. Allprice, and hastily despatched a messenger after the messenger, and then descending he mingled with the crowd below, and talked in low, compassionate tones; the case exceeded his first apprehensions; had his mind been thus distracted through the night, and if not, at what time did the fatal symptoms make their appearance? And as the buzz rose, and the inquiries as to what the crazy man had said now became importunate, he waved off the eager throng, and then uplifting his hand, solemnly besought them to go peaceably away. "This tumult," he said, "excites and enrages the poor fellow so much that there is no foreseeing what may be the end of it; he is apparently in a fit already, and quiet is the best medicine we can administer till the doctor comes. I beg, therefore, as a personal favor to myself, that you will go away!" The crowd began immediately to withdraw, convinced alike of the insanity of the one man, and of the Christian benevolence and beautiful moral charity of the other.

There were some low-voiced inquiries for the tavern-keeper, but it was the general conclusion that he had either been taking a drop too much himself, or that he had meant to play them all a trick, and that the best way to be even with him was to pay him no attention whatever.

Seeing, or rather feeling, how the case stood, Samuel

dragged himself to one of the windows of the shed, and thrusting out his head over that of a calf, which, slowly bleeding to death, had instinctively found an airhole, began to address the dissolving multitude: "I ain't crazy, good neighbors!" he cried; "I ain't no more crazy than you are. I'm in my right mind and the full possession of all my sense; I understood what I said perfectly, and your preacher here understood too, but he wants to persuade you that I am out o' my head, so that he can get me out o' the way, for purposes of his own. I mustn't say what, because I should have to call names that I've got no business to mention in such a place."

"How ingenious!" whispered Mr. Lightwait, sighing and shaking his head.

"What does he say?" demanded Samuel, "that I talk nonsense? If he says so, he knows better; and if he says I'm crazy, he lies, preacher though he is, and Bishop's son though he is. If I had but his shoulders in my grip, I'd shake the truth out of him, or into him, for I doubt if it ever was in him! What does he go a-sneakin' into Peter's cellar, of nights, for? Ask him that, won't you, some of you? I can tell you what it's for; it's to put himself in league with the devil agin me. He may succeed for a time, but if there's any justice in heaven, his bright hair will have to come to the ashes yet; there's an eye that can foller him, even through the darkness o' midnight; and the judgment day'll come!"

Here Mr. Lightwait, who remained calm and self-possessed, again besought his friends and brethren to disperse themselves quietly, and no longer encourage the pitiable vagaries of a madman.

Samuel caught the last word: "look at me," he cried, "you that have hearts in your bosoms, and tell me if I look like a madman!"

Hoots and cries and roars of derisive laughter interrupted him; he had made a point against himself; looks were certainly not just then in his favor. He had been under a heavy pressure of excitement for the last twenty-four hours; had parted for good and all, as he believed, with the object of the strongest and most concentrated love of his life, and whoever knows such a parting, knows that it is like dividing the marrow from the bones, and the heart from the life blood; he had spent the night sleeplessly, among bleed-

ing and moaning calves and sheep, guarded as a felon; and the fierce strife in his bosom, had dug lines along his brow, hollowed his eyes, and pinched his cheeks. There were straws sticking in his beard and hair, his voice was strained and unnatural, and if anything had been wanting to complete the picture of a maniac, the violent gesticulations of his chained hands, and his position, staring and glowering from the loft of the butchery, must have done it.

There was great eagerness to catch what he said, and those who stood nearest acted as reporters, but while one thing was being distributed, another was being enunciated, so that, what with distortions and what with lost portions, the speech as reported among the by-standers had little coherency and less sense. Every minute, therefore, that Samuel hung balanced thus upon the window seat, made as a dead weight against him. He felt this, and in the effort to retrieve himself, made matters worse.

"That man is to blame for it all!" he said, shaking his tangled locks, and pointing his long fore-finger at Mr. Lightwait, who stood a dozen yards away with folded arms and sadly downcast eyes; "that man is to blame for it all; I don't blame you, my friends; things look agin me just now." Cries of "that's so!" and "you're right there, old feller!" and he went on: "I know that as well as you do, my friends, and I know he's got the upper hand o' me, and I'm bound to go under." "That ere's so! you hit it there, if you are crazy!" "I'm bound to go under for the time, but in the long run o' things, the right rules, and I'm just as certain to come up; these chains are only on my hands, but he's got 'em on his soul, and they'll grow heavier and heavier, and tighter and tighter, till by and by he'll be glad to be in my shoes!"

"Don't you wish that ere time was come, though, ha, Sam? Mr. Lightwait glad for to be into your shoes! Golly, that's rich!"

"You may laugh, but" —

"Glad you 'low us such a high privilege — ho, ho, ho! he, he, he! haw, haw, haw!" Don't ye feel cheap now, say?"

"God-a-mercy!" Samuel began, but his voice was drowned by the interrogation — "How'll ye trade yourself off, ha, Sam? I've got a dog, I have, that I'll swap for ye, and then whoever likes the fun of it, may shoot the dog!"

This speech was provocative of immenso cheering and laughter.

"Shoot me, if you like," says Samuel, "only take sure aim, that's all I ask; my life isn't worth anything to me."

"Golly! Shouldn't think it would be!"

"It ain't, and I don't make no pretence that it is — that man, that good man, as he would have you think him, has robbed me of all that made life dear."

"Heavenly Moses! just hear him! he says the preacher's stole his money! Hoorah! go it Sam! you're a buster, you are! You'll have it next that the preacher's murdered you, won't ye, ha?"

"That will be his next accusation, I dare say," responded Mr. Lightwait, and then he said, turning one of his pockets playfully inside out, "that perhaps the honorable gentleman would like to have him searched!"

By this sort of by-play and side talk Mr. Lightwait managed to create and stimulate the very impressions most prejudicial to Samuel, while he appeared to be seeking his best interests. He kept himself conspicuously before him with the design probably to aggravate him to the utmost, as he did; so that finally, when he said he must insist on the dispersion of the assembly, lest the lunatic might become suddenly enraged and harm some person or persons, Samuel fairly leapt from the window.

"By G—d," he cried, "I would make your words come true if I could get at your throat!"

"What does the madman say? did any body hear? tell him to sing it out again!" and such like cries followed thick and fast.

Then it was reported that Samuel had threatened the life of the preacher — then that he had broken his bonds, and armed with a butcher's knife and axe was cutting his way through all obstacles, and that probably fifteen or twenty persons, the clergyman among them, would be murdered outright.

A dozen strong men were immediately selected, arms put into their hands, and a protecting circle formed about the Bishop's son, who was of course the object of most special care and interest.

Samuel's head sunk down lower and lower; "it's no use," he said, "you believe in him, and your all agin me,

though he has stabbed me through the heart, and I am slowly bleeding to death. Well, God have mercy on me!"

"I thought it would come to that!" says Mr. Lightwait, "he says that I have stabbed him, and he is bleeding to death! Really there is no end of the fantastic absurdities of such a madman."

"God-a-mercy!" cried Samuel again, his face all buried in his beard, and his head broken down, as it were, upon his bosom.

"He is getting to be blasphemous," called out some one from the crowd, and two or three strong men took hold of him from within, and, dragging him back from the window, chained him more securely to the wall.

A circle of armed men surrounded the shed, and Mr. Lightwait, protected by a squad before and behind, was just moving off when a voice called to him to stop for one moment. It was Mrs. Whiteflock, her face all eloquent with tenderness and tears. "Brother Lightwait," she said, "I can't think Samuel is crazy, and I beg you will use your influence in his favor!"

Mr. Lightwait slowly and sadly moved his head from side to side. "I have already done what I could, my good sister," he said, "as our friends here can testify."

"Friends, indeed! A crazy mob; twice as crazy as the man they accuse!" And then she said, "I don't believe he is insane, and I don't see how you can believe it! He is just as rational as I am!"

"That may easily be!" sneered a well-known voice, and turning quickly, her eyes fell upon Luther Larky, who had constituted himself one of the squad to escort Mr. Lightwait to his home.

She lowered her eyes haughtily as soon as they fell upon him, and without further notice went on with her plea.

"He is not insane," she said, "I am quite satisfied, let the tavern-keeper be called, and let us see what his testimony will be; but whatever else may be said, here you are alive and well, and Samuel imprisoned and in disgrace, and I do hope you will be to him a friend in his hour of need."

"Yes, you'd have him a-shootin' at you next, I reckon; what you s'pose he shot at, las' night? his shadder!" interposed Luther Larky.

"Very likely it was a shadow," answered Mrs. Whiteflock;

"and under the influence of temporary excitement, which you can perhaps explain, Brother Lightwait, he is acting and talking a little wildly just now, but you and all men are safe from any danger."

"Really, Sister Whiteflock, you attribute more knowledge to me than I am possessed of. I don't see what explanation I can make, I am sure."

"I do, then, at least in part," she answered, "and I hope in the name of all that is right, you will not hold back."

The color did deepen a little in the cheek of the young "bishop," but he was not for a single moment at a loss. Bending almost to her ear he said in a low, earnest voice, "You are bringing suspicion upon yourself by this over anxiety on account of a stranger, and an evident adventurer, to say the least." He had transferred the redness now, and a good deal of confusion with it, and turning to Luther he said "You had better take Sister Whiteflock home; all this excitement is too much for her."

Luther was delighted and revenged, both at once. "Come, Martha," he said, taking her hand and slipping it through his arm, as one who had a right.

She drew away from him with more anger than dignity, and sinking on the frame-work of an old sled standing by the road side, and all covered and surrounded with swines' bristles, gave herself up to that final resource, expedient, weakness and strength of woman — tears. She could not help herself; the events of the last few hours were too much for her, sure enough. She was an object of special interest only for a moment, however. Four boys came dancing and skipping forward, bearing between them on a trestle, constructed of hoop-poles, the hide of the bullock just slaughtered, wet and dripping, and so folded together as to leave the two horns standing squarely out in front, and the tail trailing behind. A whole troop of ragamuffins followed, hallooing, screaming, and bellowing with might and main, and fiercely contending for the place of honor in the procession, which was, of course, the immediate neighborhood of the trestle, special consideration accruing to those who were near enough to catch hold of the tail.

The glossy skirt of Mrs. Whiteflock had some mud thrown upon it, and some dry bristles whirled against it, as the ret-

innee swept by, drawing all eyes after it. So the world goes, and so it will go, as it seems likely to the end.

It was toward the sunset of the day, and the long shadows stretching weird and solemn up the eastern hillsides, when Margaret, pale, and sick in head and heart, stole out of the house and seated herself on the doorsteps — the steps of which she had been so proud — to breathe the fresh air and listen to the twittering lullabies of the birds, as they chose their green lodgings and settled themselves for the night. Her faithful Wolf sat upright beside her, beating the stone with his tail now and then, snapping his black jaws at the flies, or making little yawns, all of which was make believe, and artfully, so to speak, designed to engage the attention of his young mistress. She did so far notice him at length, as to lay her little hand on his great head, but she did not speak, her thoughts being all otherwhere, far otherwhere.

As she sat thus, conflicting hopes and fears crushing upon her like a great weight, her attention was arrested by the jolting of a heavy wagon along the turnpike road, and an accompanying clamor of voices. Wolf sprang to the ground with a fierce, belligerent growl, and looking up, her eyes rested upon Samuel Dale, but how changed from the previous night, when he had dropped on his knee before her, among the meadow flowers, and under the moonlight, radiant with the fervor of a sweetly sincere and honest passion. The whole man was transformed; all the dash and fire was gone; the hands tied; the attitude drooping; the spirit that looked out of the eyes broken, but forgivingly reproachful. She was on her feet and reaching out her arms involuntarily. A smile so kind and yet so sad it almost broke her heart with the vast love and pity it awakened, greeted her for an instant, and then, as he turned his face backward for one last farewell, some fellow of his guard, ruder than the rest, knocked his hat over his eyes, and thus loaded with double ignominy he vanished out of her sight.

They were taking him to a mad-house.

When Margaret sank back to her stony seat, a moan that was like the moan of one dying, broke on her lip, and then, casting herself down, she buried her face in her arms, and lay silent and shut within herself, till the sun went down and the moon coming up touched her hair lightly with its trembling and tender beams.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BISHOP'S SON GETS MARGARET'S RING.



T was not the touch of the moonlight that started Margaret, and caused her to look up with surprise and displeasure in her eyes.

"My poor child, I knew you must suffer, as we all do, indeed; it has been a terrible shock that we have undergone, but you, from your sensitive nature, have felt it more, doubtless, than the rest of us, who are of commoner clay; and yet, knowing all this, as I do, I come to claim your sympathy and ask your help. It is audacious, I know, but we men hold women so far above us that we expect miracles of them; and therefore, being troubled exceedingly, I fly to my angel."

Of course it was Mr. Lightwait who said this, Margaret had recognized him even before the shadow of his hand fell upon her, and for a moment she almost hated him; and as she sat up and turned her eyes full upon him, their cold glance struck like a chill into his blood. His manner became timid and hesitant, and his voice, always a power upon her, fell to a tone of such supplianee and pleading, that her heart, before he paused, was listening with something akin to pity.

He was not come then with prying curiosity, — not to insult her in her sorrow with cold advice or affected sympathy; perhaps he did not know of her love for Samuel at all; there was no reason to suppose he did, except that her own heart felt as if all eyes saw it through and through. He was himself suffering, and it somehow lightened her spirit to know that she was not set apart, and single in affliction; and more than this, he was come to her as an equal and a friend — as to a dear friend. She was surprised out of her anger, as well as out of her extreme wretchedness. There

was something to be said for another's comfort; something to be done; a sacrifice to be made, perhaps, and woman would not be woman if she were not brought to herself in such circumstances.

If one had seen the glance with which she chilled him at first, it would have been difficult to conceive that within a short hour her hand would have been resting confidently in his; yet such was the case.

O woman, is thy name, then, frailty, after all!

Not so much so as it would appear, sometimes, perhaps; she is so many-sided, so impressionable, that she seems one thing at one moment, and another, at another; but let her once have a sincere conviction, and she will, for the most part, be pretty true to it; and what is more, she is dreadfully true to her prejudices and her imaginations, insomuch that they may be said to have with her all the force of facts. But this, perhaps, is damaging the case by proving too much. And even admitting that, a woman's heart may by possibility be moved — why not? Get but a place to rest one's lever and the world may be moved, they say.

The young clergyman found the all important rest in the only tenable ground which by any possibility he could just then have selected; he found it in the pity and sympathy of the girl, and once having this vantage, he well understood how to avail himself of it. He was weary, worn, sad, suffering, bewildered, and altogether helpless and despondent; nay, more, he was not quite clear as to uprightness of conduct, though he was perfectly so as to uprightness of purpose.

Would Margaret help his weakness with her strength? illumine his darkness with her light?

Of course she was flattered now as well as interested, and listened graciously, almost gratefully.

He began far away, and talked of the trials, troubles, crosses and tribulations of life in general; of the weakness and waywardness of men, with constant and regretful allusion to his own weakness; and of the utter worthlessness of life without the consolations of Christian faith and hope.

By and by he came round to his own more private and personal afflictions; he was alone in the world; nobody had ever cared for him, or understood him, since his dear sainted mother left the world — not even his sister Kate, though she

was much better than he — she was self-sufficient, self-sustained; her daily walk and conversation were Christian models; but it must be admitted, after all, that she was rather a devotee than a really devout person; he would not say this to everybody; he would not say it to anybody, but his own sweet little friend, whose heart was so pure and so generous and so open.

"Kate is a little proud of me," he said, "though Heaven knows she has no reason to be so; but as for loving me — loving me as I desire to be loved! O, Margaret!" And he bowed his head on his hands, and was silent a good while.

"It was so dreadful," he said, at length, "to have those of one's household unsympathetic, to live in such nearness of relation, and yet be so strange, — to be so untrue, and obliged to be so, for he could speak plainly to his dear little friend. And how could one be true when one's nature was constantly cramped, hampered, thwarted or put to shame in one way or another?"

If he had any sorrow, but more especially any secret of a tender sort, why he would never dare go to Kate with it! He would conceal it, of necessity, and perhaps assume a feeling the directly opposite of the true one, and thus to make the heart's treasure a burden to the heart, was an unnatural condition of suffering against which all that was best in us rebelled, and of right, ought to rebel. Margaret sighed; he had, as he very well understood, described her own situation, and thus brought her sympathy to the dangerous edge of pity, a pity that was very tender, to say the least.

"Oh! my child, I am making you sad," he said, responsive to the sigh, at the same time taking her hand and folding it between his palms. And then he said he had no right to trouble her with such melancholy recitals, for she, of course, in her own experience, could know nothing of such. They seemed trifles to be sure, but it was, after all, trifles like these that made all the difference in life; that made one man's house a heaven, and another's a hell. He could not feel that he was all destitute of manhood; he thought there was yet something in him that would rise up to meet a great trial or an honest opposition, but the tease and worry incident to unsympathetic relations he knew not how to parry or overcome.

And having thus brought himself into oneness of feeling with Margaret, he said, pressing the hand he still held, "Forgive me, but my heart has been deeply stirred to-day, and I am in the humor of pouring it all out."

He spoke of Samuel Dale, and of the hardness that was generally expressed towards him, and he gave Margaret to understand that that was what had so sorely touched his heart.

"I have felt so kindly toward the young man," he said, "nay, kindness would not express the warmth of my regard, that I was pained inexpressibly to hear bitter words spoken of him, and to see him subjected to harsh and what seemed cruel treatment."

"And yet it appeared utterly useless," he went on to say, "for him to stand out alone against the popular sentiment, just then." When a few days had gone by, and the unreasonable wrath and indignation had subsided a little, he proposed to call a church meeting, and suggest and lead in certain movements in behalf of their poor friend. It had seemed to him, all things considered, wisest and best that the tide should take its natural flow, for the present, for that it must inevitably ebb in a short time, and perhaps take a favorable turn; at the worst Samuel would suffer nothing except it were some trifling restraint of person, and perhaps a little mental disquietude.

But, after all, he was not quite satisfied, not perfectly assured but that it was his duty to go himself, with the party who had him in charge, to see and know that his instructions were carried out to the letter, and that nothing, either by word or act, was done that could aggravate his unfortunate malady. He trusted and believed that nothing of this nature would be done; certainly not, if he could suppose himself possessed of any influence, as he had not failed to exert his poor eloquence to its very utmost, in his favor.

Yet, somehow, his conscience was not quite easy,—he might possibly have done or said something further, though he did not clearly see how; there was so little of humanitarian sentiment in the mob. Margaret could have no idea. Here he related his experience of the morning pretty nearly as it occurred, but how different a coloring he gave the facts! so different that he appeared in the representation as the sweetest and most anxious of peacemakers. His visit to

the butcher's loft he recapitulated, and repeated his conversation with Samuel almost word for word; he was insane past all doubt, poor fellow—"for instance," said he, "though he seemed to recognize me, he at the same time called me Bishop John—a name that nobody ever heard of—very remarkable, wasn't it?" He had forgotten that he had told Margaret about the "communication" purporting to be from his mother's spirit, in which he was addressed by the same name, but Margaret had not forgotten it, and the coincidence struck her as very remarkable indeed. She said nothing, however, and he went on. "He also said that he knew my mother before me, my mother who has been dead these twenty years, heaven rest her soul, and he insisted upon giving her some strange name, too, let me see, well, no matter, it has slipped my memory, but it was fantastic enough."

Then he asked Margaret if she could see wherein he had failed of his duty, and begged her, if she were not satisfied with his conduct in the matter, to say so plainly, that he might make what amends it was yet possible to make.

And somehow, in all this, he bolstered himself up, and took a sort of comfort, as though he had really spoken the honest truth and asked honestly for advice. He so made the truth he had mingled in cover all the evasions, sanctify all the—shall we say falsehoods? He would not, it is to be presumed.

So there he sat, looking so meek, so patient under suffering, under wrong, almost, Margaret could not have the heart to find fault with him. She only hung her head aside and sighed, "Poor Samuel, poor, poor Samuel."

He seemed to enter at once into her feeling, and talked of Samuel apparently without the least reserve, and what he said appeared the more frank that it was not all in his justification, for as Margaret was forced to admit to herself, it was all just. He spoke for the most part in praise, and where he was forced to blame, with great tenderness. He would get the better, under skilful treatment, of this possession, and be with them again in a few days, he hoped, in his right mind. "And then we shall all be so happy again, shan't we?"

"And do you really believe he will be with us again so soon?" and Margaret looked up hopefully in his face.

"I trust so, darling."

She drew herself away — her brow clouding. "Ay, I trust so, my darling child," he repeated, and took her again quite in his arms. Then he said, "But for such freaks of fancy as I have told you of, he seemed lucid and behaved for the most part well enough; the doctor is very encouraging, and we have all good reason to hope."

She nestled to his side and began to prattle almost gayly of this and that, and to laugh as a child, at anything and nothing.

Then quickly, and as if he were not quite pleased with her pleasure, he said there were, however, it must be owned, symptoms that justified the worst apprehensions; his eyes had now a wild, wandering look, and now a glassy stare. "And, would you believe it, at one time he even threatened my life!"

"Is it possible?" very coldly.

"Ay, and moreover, he told the crowd I had stolen his money, or something to that effect; they all heard it, and their evidence will corroborate mine."

Then Margaret asked him, dryly, if anybody doubted what he said, that he had need to bring other witnesses?

He looked upon her with gentle, sorrowful reproach.

"My own heart doubts and questions me, not yours, my child, I know. Now that the terrible scene is over, and as I sit here in the rapt serenity of your presence, it all seems like some dark deception, or dreadful dream; to think that Samuel, our good, loving, great-hearted Samuel, should have accused me of theft, and have lifted a murderous hand against me! Really, it is not a thing to be received without concurrent testimony. Ah, you do not and cannot understand how I have suffered about this matter, first and last."

This was the truth, and his pathetic utterance of it so affected him that the tears came to his eyes.

Margaret was all trust and tenderness again, and hid her eyes in the arm that embraced her. With every kind word he spoke of Samuel he grappled her to him with hooks of steel. Was this, then, his object? The reader knows as much as Margaret knew at the time, but it may be said, that if such had been his sole object, he could not have played his cards more adroitly.

She lifted her face at last with such beseeching — "You said just now his symptoms justified the worst apprehensions — do you, then, think his life in danger?"

"Is it so much to you, my darling? so very much?" And the drooping cheek of the pastor touched the bright head of the young girl.

"I thought it was much to us all," Margaret said, with that evasion so characteristic of the sex. And then she said: "I am not sure that I have quite understood you. You say he is insane, past doubt, and yet you say the people are all indignant toward him. Now it seems to me if he is crazy they ought to pity him; you say, too, that he is possessed, whatever that means, and that you think he will be well again in a few days, and back here amongst us, and then you intimate that his life is in danger! I suppose I am very dull, but I don't know what to think." And then she fell to sobbing and cried, "O, what if he was to die!"

He did not answer at first, but petted and soothed her much as a gentle mother might pet and soothe her sick and wayward baby; at last he said, speaking with infinite tenderness, that madness had many phases, so many that it was difficult for the wisest to pronounce what was sanity and what was insanity; "but this of our poor friend"—he patted Margaret's cheek as he spoke—"seems to me especially complicated and puzzling." He had never seen, nor heard of anything precisely answering to it, of a surety not in modern times—"but we read of possessions not unlike it," he said; and then he made melancholy allusion to the demon agony of Saul, through which the harp of David melted so happily at last. And then, giving his voice a softer modulation, he said he knew a voice as marvelously sweet as that harp could have been, and that he was not without hope that it might yet melt through and melt away this latter possession, whether demoniac or insane.

Margaret was not much wiser than before, and not a bit less wretched and hopeless. The anger that had at first worked like madness in her brain, against Samuel, had burned itself down now and lay smouldering in black and bitter discontent, with herself, with everybody.

She saw the clouds going across the faces of the stars, and it seemed to her as if there were mists creeping over the clear lights of her judgment in the same way, and yet she felt utterly powerless to free herself from the obscurity; felt, in fact, no inclination to free herself, getting somehow a sort of comfort out of the thing that she suspected to be

false — such strange absurdities are there in the human heart, especially in the heart of woman.

"And so you think me muddled or inconsistent or both?" Mr. Lightwait said, breaking a somewhat embarrassing silence.

"No, sir. I only said I didn't quite understand you."

"Very well; it is all one, and I love you all the better for coming so near to me — do you know I don't like to have the width of the world between us," and he drew her very close to him as he spoke.

Margaret tapped the ground silently with her foot, but made no other reply, and he went on, "Yes, I love you all the better; this plain speaking quite charms me; there is so little downright honesty in the world; besides, it is just what I need. We preachers are apt to become arrogant, and require a little preaching to now and then. I see myself constantly running into modes of thought and habits of behavior that are almost disgusting to me when I get outside my accustomed trammels and look squarely at myself. You are the friend I need, just the friend I need, my dear."

"You are very good to say so," Margaret answered, "but it is not possible that I should be the least serviceable to you."

"As a man thinketh, pretty one; but allow me to be the best judge; in your modesty you do not truly estimate yourself."

Margaret did not know how to reply to such talk as this, and said simply that she had always been taught by her mother that she thought too much of herself.

"Never do you believe that!" he answered, "Mothers are of all persons the least able to form correct judgments of their children, more especially of their daughters. Trust me, you are in no danger of thinking too much of yourself, but, on the contrary, you are in great danger of underrating yourself — of marrying beneath you, for instance."

"I am in no danger of marrying at all," Margaret answered coldly.

"Pardon me, but I say you are, all the same, and of marrying beneath yourself, too."

"What makes you say so?"

"Well, for one thing, the best and loveliest women always do, and then, perhaps, there is another reason why I think so."

"What is that, sir?" and Margaret spoke freezingly this time.

He answered gayly, "Who can view the ripened rose, nor seek to wear it." And then more seriously, "Good women are so unconscious, and withal, have so much need of being loved, that they are likely to be won by whoever comes to woo, and the rudest hand will always single out the brightest flower." And then he said, "Shakspeare understood women, as instance his marrying Desdemona to the Moor."

He might as well have spoken Greek as for all Margaret received of his meaning, but she had that great wisdom that knows enough not to talk of what it knows nothing, and she therefore remained silent.

Directly he broke out with:—

"Scene first. — Venice; a street. Enter Roderigo and Iago.

"Tush! never tell me that I take it much unkindly
That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse
As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this."

He paused after this flourish, and then, without gesture and as if speaking to himself, he began anew:—

"A maiden never bold,
Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion
Blushed at herself; and she in spite of nature,
Of years, of country, credit, everything,—
To fall in love with what she feared to look on!"

Then he sighed, and then he said, "I would like to read you that whole play sometime, my little Desdemona—I read Shakspeare beautifully! I ought to have been an actor by rights."

"O, Mr. Lightwait, not a playactor?"

"And why not, my innocence? all men are actors, more or less, especially all men who speak in public; 'tis their vocation, and what difference whether the wood they stand on be called platform, pulpit, or boards—the acting is all one—but I shock you, I see. Well, let's be serious, and call executors and make our wills; for heaven's sake let's sit upon the ground, for I perceive you think a preacher ought not to be a man, whereas, as I conceive, only a man should be a preacher. I am obliged to yield to the popular prejudice and keep straightlaced, and appear sanctimonious nine

hours out of ten ; pray be lenient and suffer me to be myself for that tenth hour ; I shall be all the better for it."

"Of course ; so far as I am concerned you may be what you like."

"That is granting too much, for though I want to be myself, I don't want you to be indifferent about it ; I should distrust my own judgment as against yours, most assuredly."

Then Margaret said Father Goodman was a man, and a preacher too, and that for her part she didn't believe he ever in his life regretted that he had not been a playactor !

"And so you think you have made a bad exchange ? Well, I dare say you have — nay, more, I know you have ; I am in no way so worthy as he ; dear, pure, single-hearted, devout old man."

Then Margaret's conscience smote her, and she replied, "I didn't say we had made a bad exchange."

"No, you didn't say so, dear, but if you had I should have quite agreed with you. I wish I could be apprenticed to Father Goodman for a year or two, and see if I would not come out a better workman."

He spoke with such sincerity, and seemed so contrite and smitten that Margaret's sympathies were all enlisted again.

He changed his tone suddenly, "I see you are growing tired, perhaps it is late. I never know the hour, not when I enjoy it. Can you see the time, my dear ?" and pulling out his watch, he held it before Margaret's face, passing his arm around her neck as he did so. She announced the time, which was not late to be sure, and said very emphatically that she was by no means tired ; the truth was, she wished and hoped to hear something further about Samuel. "And you can see the time plainly by this light. Can you tell it at this distance ? and at this ?" And still he kept his arm about her neck as he raised the position of the watch, then he praised her eyes — he had never seen such light in human orbs — why it reached quite across the church and struck him like an arrow every time he preached.

"O, if my eyes are so terrible, I must look another way, that is all."

"Not for the world !" And he drew the arm so tight that it brought her head quite against his bosom.

She was frightened, and fluttered out of his arm so hurriedly as to alarm him in turn ; he well knew how to

change the ruffled mood, however: "By the way, Margaret," he said, "we have strayed, somehow, far away from the central subject of our talk; let us get back, if we can manage to tell where we were. Oh, I know now, you were accusing me of inconsistency, and perhaps to get away from the point of your shaft, I ran into all sorts of vagaries.

"You were remarking that the mob was unjust in being so incensed against Samuel if he were really insane, and you were right, but you know there is never any justice nor sense in a mob; and do you know, I believe they were dreadfully disappointed and vexed to find that he was not really a murderer, and that there would be no execution, after all. Not very flattering to me, is it? this view, for they certainly left me quite out of the question. Poor Samuel! I wonder if he had any secret grudge in his heart against me before the insanity came on? But it is not possible he could have had. Did you ever hear him speak of me, darling?"

"Not that I know of," Margaret answered promptly, but what she had said was not true and she could not stick to it, and added directly, "O, yes, I remember now, I have heard him speak of you."

"And what said he?"

"Well, I hardly know, nothing that I can repeat." And in this way she quieted her conscience, though she had made her first lie not a whit the less.

I am sorry to have to record this of Margaret, but I see no other way, if I truly represent her, as I certainly wish to do.

"You don't remember what he said of me! Pardon me, my dear, but, somehow, I half think you do."

He spoke playfully, so that Margaret could not feel a right to be offended — for which she was sorry; so she answered, without apparent hesitation: "What makes you think so?"

"O, I don't know. If you will allow me to come upon your ground."

"But I will not."

"That is like the sex, always arrogating special privileges."

"And if they do," said Margaret, "they have cause; so much they ought to have is denied them that they take what they can get, and I am sure you men have no right to complain."

"Whew! Why, what a little reprobate you are! Woman's rights, to be sure."

"I don't know anything about woman's rights, but I do know that women can't do a good many things that men can do, things there would be no harm in doing, too."

"For instance?"

"Well, then, for instance, I suppose I couldn't go to see Samuel if I should want to ever so bad!"

"Certainly; why not? I will take you myself; I propose to visit him in a day or two, at any rate."

"And will you really take me?" And Margaret looked up in his face with such joy.

"Take, O take those eyes away," he cried, turning his face from her as if he were dazzled.

"To be sure, I will take you; it will be a great delight to me, but if it cost me some sacrifice I would do it all the same, if it gave you pleasure. I am not so utterly frivolous, nor so entirely destitute of Christian grace, I hope, as you thought me just now."

"I didn't think you so."

"Ah, but you did! and thought worse than that, I am afraid."

"What makes you say so?"

"Well, I can't explain; for one of your woman's reasons, maybe—just because."

"But that will not do; if you accuse me of such thoughts, you must explain."

"Well, then, I don't know why I said so. Will that do?"

"No; that will not do."

"Will this, then?" His lips touched her forehead so lightly that it could hardly be called a kiss, and yet it admitted of no other interpretation. Margaret withdrew herself to the other end of the doorstep, and pulled the long grass at her feet. Then the young man said he was the most unfortunate and ill-starred of men—that he could not even touch the least lamb of his flock without alarming or wounding it; adding, "But when shall we go to visit your friend,—to-morrow?"

Margaret had not hoped that it would be so soon, and she smiled brightly again, and left off pulling the grasses. "Yes, to-morrow; and should it not be in the morning? and how early? Mother will let us have the little market wagon."

Then she hung her head abashed. "Maybe he wouldn't like to ride in anything so common," she said.

"Ah, my child, I do not so forget the meekness of my Master! I know I follow him very, very far away, but I try with all my might." Then he said his name should have been Peter, and not John.

Margaret stood up, all on tiptoe, and said she would go and ask mother about the cart. He drew her to his side again; "No darling," he said, "pray don't ask such a favor of your mother, not on Samuel's account."

Margaret's cheek burned like fire, if he knew her mother's dislike of Samuel, he knew her liking too! So one way or another he contrived to keep her uneasy, or irritated, or both, all the while. She felt, however, in this instance, that her plan would not be feasible, and remained silent.

"No, don't trouble Mrs. Fairfax," he went on — "I'll borrow Mr. Timpson's new dearbin, as he calls it, and that will answer nicely — let me see, is it too late to call at his house on my way home?"

He referred to his watch again and concluded that it would be too late — "but I will make it a point to see him the first thing in the morning," he concluded.

"Now don't forget it," pleaded Margaret in her childish anxiety.

"You may tie a string round my finger!" and laughing, he held up his hand.

She shook her head — "but you won't forget."

"I fear I shall, without some reminder, but this will do!"

And before she could prevent it, he had stript Samuel's ring from her finger.

"O, not that!" she cried reaching eagerly to recover it.

"And why, my pet? is it so specially sacred?" And he examined the ring curiously, and then he put it on his own finger, saying it was of trifling worth in itself, and he could easily replace it if that were all.

What could Margaret do? She could not for her life say lightly, nor otherwise, that it was of value to her and that nothing could replace it, and that she would prefer to have it back.

"The gift of some school-girl, I suspect," he continued, still eyeing it.

Margaret felt that Samuel's precious gift was disparaged, and could have cried.

He saw the uneasiness she could not conceal, and went on, "if it is really the gift of a sweetheart—a betrothal pledge, or anything of that sort, you may have it back; I did not dream it was of so much importance." And he made as if he would return it, but did not do so, nevertheless.

"So you give it back to-morrow, it is of no consequence that you keep it to-night," Margaret said, with a great effort to appear indifferent, and covering the finger from which it had been taken from her own sight as though she feared that Samuel too might see from far away that it was gone.

"O, thank you! How good you are too trust me with anything so dear to you; I would not lose it for all the world; but see how tight it fits; I could not, if I would, lose it off." And he put his hand in hers, that she might satisfy herself of its safety.

Then Margaret said it was not so very dear, but it was all the ring she had, and for that reason she wanted it back.

O, Samuel, it was well for you that as you tossed on your narrow lunatic bed that night, divided by your iron door from the sweet moonlight in which Margaret sat, that you could not hear her words—that you could not see upon whose finger the ring shone. Of all things, he would have desired to look upon his little sweetheart, but in denial his prayer was answered in God's own best way.

And doubtless it is thus with us all, oftener than we imagine.

"Yes, I am glad you will trust me so far," the pastor renewed, directly, "for now that I come to think of it I shall certainly need a reminder, for I can't see Brother Timpson in the morning; I am so sorry, for you are so impatient, ain't you, my dear?"

"I am disappointed; but why can't you see him?"

"Well, you see I have to write my sermon to-morrow; I always put it off to the last minute, and I can't possibly delay it any longer; but if I get on well, I will see him in the afternoon."

"Surely you can do so in the evening, at any rate," pleaded Margaret.

"No, darling; that is our Bible class, you know, and you

will not fail to be there; perhaps I shall then have matters arranged."

"O, I hope so!" And then Margaret said if it were doubtful about his not having time to spare, she would not mind to go herself and see Brother Timpson.

"Ah, that would never do, my dear; it might betray too much. At any rate, it would occasion remark, and you know you were saying yourself, a little while ago, that there were some things, harmless in themselves, that a woman must not do; more's the pity, but so it is." And then he said he would himself guard and shield her from all remark, as far as possible.

Margaret could not have been more thoroughly uncomfortable than this dubious sort of kindness made her, and yet she could not quite explain to herself why she was so uneasy. It was very good of her pastor, to be sure, to come and see her, and to offer to do so much for her. She ought to be ashamed of her distrust; nay, more, she ought to be satisfied, and gratefully content; but, say this as she would, it did not make her so.

He stood up before her all at once, and began to declaim again:—

"Hear me, good madam.
Your loss is as yourself, great; and you bear it
As answering to the weight; would I might never
Overtake pursued success, but I do feel,
By the rebound of yours, a grief that smites
My very heart at root."

Then, in a lighter tone:—

"Farewell! I will omit no opportunity
That may convey my greetings, love, to thee."

He stooped, kissed her forehead and was gone.

"What has the bishop's son been saying to you, my dear?" inquired Mrs. Fairfax, who had been ostensibly busy at her embroidery all the evening, at that happy distance which wise mothers know so well how to estimate at a single glance.

"O, about the Bible class, and one thing and another," answered Margaret, pretending to yawn, and lighting her candle, she went to bed.

"By the by, mother," she said next morning at breakfast, "Mr. Lightwait asked me, last night, to ride to town with him sometime within a day or two—may I go?"

"Mr. Lightwait asked you to ride to town with him, and you not tell of it till now! Why, you are crazy, child, else you have been dreaming!"

"No, I am neither; he surely asked me to go with him, and he said he would borrow brother Timpson's Dearbin for the occasion."

"Well, of all things! I guess he talked of something, then, last night, besides the Bible class! And what a sweet, lovely, handsome man he is. And his coat fits him as if it was made on him, and the way his name is embroidered in his handkerchief is exquisite! I wonder if his sister Katherine does it? I wish I could learn the stitch. His handkerchief, though, ain't a bit finer than Dr. Allprice's, not one bit." Then she said she wondered if the doctor would be at the class that night, and then she said she didn't know what made her think of that, she was sure she didn't care anything about it; and after a little silence she remarked that Sam Dale, for one, wouldn't be there, anyhow, a-taking all the room! And this was the first time she had mentioned his name since that he was carried away.

CHAPTER X.

DR. ALLPRICE IN LOVE.



HEY were ready for the Bible class, betimes, for each had her special reason for wishing to be in the class that night. Mrs. Fairfax, it might have been noticed, was in her most girlish and gay attire, while Margaret was plainly, almost negligently clad.

"Dear me, what a lovely house, and how happy the woman will be who becomes mistress there; won't she, my dear?" remarked Mrs. Fairfax, as they passed the parsonage; and then she said, "And the bishop's son such a heavenly-minded man, too! And such table linen and silver

plate, and all! I'm sick of our old house, and things, when I think of it." And then she said that she had noticed that Katherine Lightwait's dresses fairly stood alone, while hers were as limp as a rag!

"For my part," answered Margaret, "I like our old house and old things, too, well enough, and as for my dresses, I don't mind their being limp, if that were all."

"Since when, pray?" replied the mother with a sneer, and little more was said till they reached the meeting-house.

Samuel's place was vacant, at first, but directly Mr. Stake, the butcher, came in, as large as life, took the seat, and filled all the aisle with the trailing scent of his marrow-fat. So goes the world, the living dog is still better than the dead lion.

"O, Margaret, do lend me your Bible!" says Mrs. Fairfax, nudging her daughter; "I have forgotten mine, and how will it look?"

Margaret had forgotten hers, too! The evening was warm, the windows open, and the tallow candles flared about and dropped their grease on the crape shawls and newly "done-up" bonnets of the ladies, while the small black insects that bite so in excess of their size, and the great, thick-shelled, green-winged bugs that disport themselves in so lively a manner in the country, of a summer evening, dashed themselves, now in the lights, now against the wall, and now in the faces of the assembly. Some of the most active and gallant of the young gentlemen caught these curious creatures under their hats, where they buzzed and thumped about to the great annoyance of the more pious old ladies, and the infinite amusement of the giddy young ones. A flock of geese spread their dirty wings, — for they were used to sail in the muddy ponds about the village — as from time to time they were assailed by the sticks and stones of the idle boys, and so ran screaming and gabbling up and down beneath the windows and about the door, creating another discord in the harmony of the time; and there was yet another in the lowing of the kine and the bawling of the young calves about the neighborhood; and if we add to these musical performances an occasional interlude from the cats that mostly congregate in the back yards, and about the wood-piles, and under the door-steps of village houses, the orchestra will be pretty complete, that is, if we omit any

mention of the teething babies that were being furiously rocked to sleep against their will.

There was a good deal of confusion in the house itself, for the brethren and sisters felt themselves far less restrained than they would have felt of a Sunday ; they were secularized by the cares and business of the day, and some of them had even come in work-day clothes, or with only a partial substitution, of Sunday things, a " clean collar and bosom," and a second-best jacket and hat ! And these fellows might be singled out at once, either as being already married, or as having no intention of going home with the girls.

The confusion of young ladies whispering behind their fans, of old ones, in one another's bonnets, and of young fellows under shelter of hands and hats, might, most of it, perhaps, have been referred to Samuel Dale, in one way or another, and Margaret felt her heart grow cold and bitter toward all who smiled as they talked. What business had they there if they did not come for instruction in sacred things ! She forgot that she had forgotten her own Bible ; and then somehow or other we never any of us quite judge ourselves with the judgment we award ; it happens that our case is exceptional.

The young fellows snuffed the candles, proudly using their fingers to let the girls see their enthusiasm in their behalf, while the girls, of the more artful sort, opened their books to show their indifference, and absorption in higher matters, for the reader may have observed that anything approaching to love between the sexes is generally regarded as a low and shameful thing, all personal responsibility, when the worst comes to the worst, and the evil unmistakably sets in, being shifted in some vague way to the " fall," with the rest of it. The whispering then ceased, the candles were snuffed, and the books opened, and all eyes for the most part, were turned anxiously expectant towards the door, for the leader of the class, for whom everything waited, had not yet appeared.

At last when the impatience became extreme, a great rustling was heard, and then a stately and stern-faced figure was seen advancing up the aisle, that was at once recognized as Miss Katherine Lightwait. She bore a huge book in her hand, and had evidently a huge weight on her soul, for she seemed as one burdened to the utmost possibility of endur-

ance, but braced up withal, to undergo the infliction that was come upon her with a commendable show of Christian resignation.

"One had better play the hypocrite through all their natural life," she said to one who commented on the plainness of her bonnet, "than be sent to hell for all eternity on account of worldliness and vanity!" And this remark will afford the key to her character. Perhaps she felt extreme rigidity, and the careful observance of all the external ceremonials to be the more binding upon her, in view of her brother's shortcomings in these respects; be that as it may, she was to a common observer a person deeply imbued with the spirit of personal piety, — so easy is it to confound the spirit with the letter.

Upon this occasion, having mentioned that the sudden illness of the pastor prevented him from participating in the sacred pleasures of the evening, she went to prayer with sledge-hammer violence, and having crashed through the customary variety of supplications and invocations, she came to Samuel, whom she designated both as a madman and a wolf in sheep's clothing that had lately stolen into their fold; and then she thanked God for the almost miraculous preservation from his wicked wiles, of at least one of the precious lambs of the flock; there was a general groan at this, and poor Margaret felt as if she were kneeling on stones. It was as if a bird of the air had carried the matter, for when the congregation arose, every eye was turned upon her; one in pity, another curiously, and another in scorn.

When she had pulled through the lesson for the evening, which she did with a great show of Christian enjoyment, she prayed again, singing through the long hymn the loudest of all, and then she came down to poor Margaret, as from a great height of secure and saintly serenity, and condescended to give her the tips of her fingers, and to hope that the Lord was sustaining her in her peculiarly trying affliction. "Get thee behind me, Satan," she said, "must be your constant prayer." And then she said, "To think the vile wretch should dare to lift his hand against a bishop's son!"

"But he was crazy, you know," pleaded Margaret. It was all one to her, however, crazy or not; he had spoken some truth of her brother that it was not pleasant to hear, and she omitted no opportunity, not even in her prayers, of aggravating the feeling against him.

Her voice was cold and metallic, and her whole manner so mechanical that she seemed both to speak and to move by means of some cunning arrangement of springs and wires, and the rustling of her silk, and the peculiar stiffness of her eyelids helped to give this seeming, reality.

She appeared to extend these iron eyelids toward one and another as she greeted them without a smile, and so she passed stately out of the house, and being joined by her man who had been seated on a stone, diverting himself with teasing an ancient gander all this while, she presently disappeared, leaving Margaret a thousand times more distressed than before.

Meantime, the young fellows were pairing off with the girls, and happy couples might be seen by the moonlight, walking slow and talking low, in every direction. Some few old women whose extreme homeliness or extreme sanctity, or both, gave them privileges, took up their outer skirts, and braving geese and cats and wanton boys, crossed the common alone; and here and there a worldly-minded husband walked grimly before his pious wife, carrying a light, of which there was no need, and speaking never one blessed word; feeling grieved and vexed and so altogether put upon that the expectation of getting into heaven at last through the wife's instrumentality, seemed but slight compensation.

An obscure brother who wore patched trowsers and shoes that clattered like wooden shoes, they were so hard and coarse, put out the lights, and locked the door, feeling himself a good deal honored thereby; and so the old, high-shouldered gravestones were left in the rear of the meeting-house to their awful solitude once more; and the owl in the elm took up her melancholy song, and the rustling of the leaves in the still light made the late traveller quicken his step, while the watcher by the sick bed drew the curtain, lest that, looking out by chance, she might see a ghost walking.

Mrs Fairfax and her child had proceeded a dozen yards or so from the door of the meeting-house, in silence, each being occupied with her own thoughts, when a smartish, chirping voice accosted them with, "Good evening, ladies; a lovely moonlight! Shall I have the pleasure?" and he offered his arm to Mrs. Fairfax. "O, how good of you, Doctor Allprice! Do you know I didn't see you? I was so taken up with my lesson, I suppose; but maybe you wasn't at the class, at all?"

Then the little doctor replied that he was at the class-meeting, most certainly, and he added, reproachfully, "Do you think it possible, Mrs. Fairfax, that I could remain away, knowing that somebody would be there? If you do, I must tell you that you do not justly appreciate my feelings."

He said the word "somebody" with that tone which no writing can represent, but which no woman can ever by any possibility mistake.

"O, you naughty man!" exclaimed Mrs. Fairfax, and then she began to talk gravely of the importance of a more thoroughly organized system of tract distribution.

"Certainly, Mrs. Fairfax! quite right, Mrs. Fairfax, and that's undoubtedly true, Mrs. Fairfax," were all the doctor's replies, so that the conversation on this head soon ran out, and the lady found herself obliged to start a new topic.

"By the way, doctor," she said, after casting about her for a minute or two, and feeling, doubtless, that she must aim high, "have you read Brother Seeley's book on the prophecies?"

No, Dr. Allprice had not read the new book, but he very much wished to; he had seen it and heard it a good deal talked about.

"Beautifully bound! isn't it?" said Mrs. Fairfax, and this subject was exhausted. Then, still wishing to keep the conversation at a high pitch, she asked him if he was an admirer of Montgomery. She had probably read a hymn or two of which he was the author.

"Well, no, not that I remember," the doctor replied. He then asked whether Mr. Montgomery were not a contributor to the Ladies' Repository!

Mrs. Fairfax was a little surprised, but womanlike, she immediately put herself upon his level, and went on talking of Montgomery as though he were a circuit rider in the next township. It was little enough she knew of the poet, to be sure, but she imagined that he was born a good while ago, and a good way off; she rather thought not in this country, and she had a faint impression that he was dead. Then she made a great leap from the sacred to the secular, and inquired if he were fond of Lord Byron?

"Ah, madam, passionately so," he replied, and straightway began to quote some of the more sentimental passages from the Hours of Idleness. For instance:—

"When nature stamped thy beauteous birth,
So much perfection in thee shone,
She feared that, too divine for earth,
The skies might claim thee for their own.
Therefore, to guard her dearest work,
Lest angels might dispute the prize,
She bade a secret lightning lurk
Within those once celestial eyes."

The arm that hung upon his, received a good many little pressures while this was being enunciated, so that the widow could not but make a personal application of it; she only said, however, with a little sigh, "How beautiful you do repeat poetry!"

"Oh, that depends upon the inspiration," replied the doctor, with quite a running fire of little squeezes upon the clinging arm.

Margaret felt herself one too many, and fell a little behind; the path was too narrow for three, she said, so that there is no saying what might have come of it then and there, but for one of those mischances that temporarily, at least, destroy the supreme felicity of so many lovers; they met, square in the road, Mr. Hoopes, the cooper.

"Well," says he, "here you are now! Why, I've just been to your house, Mrs. Fairfax, about that 'ere well-bucket I was a-mendin' up for you. I couldn't rightly tell whether you was prepared to go to the expense of iron hoops, or no; though as to that, I wouldn't make much difference, not to you, and the difference in the waley of the bucket will be incalculable. I'd advise the iron by all means, that is if my advice is of any avail."

Certainly, — Mrs. Fairfax was glad to have the cooper's advice, and she wished to have her well-bucket mended in the best way, regardless of expense, though, doubtless, this regal sinking of pecuniary considerations was all owing to the doctor's presence. She must appear magnanimous, cost or no cost, and thus it came about that she brought herself to grief.

"As to the expense," reiterated the cooper, "the iron hoop shan't be much advance upon the pole; not to you, Miss Fairfax. What I lose, I lose, but that ain't here nor there; I wouldn't send you a piece o' work wilely done, not for the whole value o' the bucket."

"Humph!" says the doctor, and he set one thumb in the armhole of his waistcoat, and drew himself up by at least an inch.

"That's all, I suppose, Mr. Hoopes," says Mrs. Fairfax, taking the hint and anxious to get on.

"Well, pretty much. A wery nice evenin' ain't it! Do you know I said to myself, Miss Fairfax won't be home such a wery fine evenin' as this, afore I sot out, and yet as a body will sometimes, you know, I up and wentured."

"Your business must have been urgent," interposed the doctor, "to disregard so strong an impression."

"Well, mister, it was urgent, and it wasn't urgent — both to onct!" Then turning to Mrs. Fairfax, he went on, "there was the hoops with your indecision onto 'em, but I won't pertend that I didn't go with malice, aforethought. I wanted a little wisit with you."

"And so sought to kill two birds with one stone!" interrupted the doctor, who could not hear such things and hold his peace.

"Well, yes, wulgarly speaking," answered the cooper, and then he says that he is not a mere wotary of fashion, that he can take clear time for wisitin', and feeling that he had given the doctor a sharp thrust, he turned to Mrs. Fairfax again.

"Yes," he repeated, "I did partly awail myself of an excuse to wisit you, and though you wasn't there, I sot for some time onto the edge of the well-curb, and that was an adwantage to me. Any how, it always chirks me up like, just for to see the holler walls into which you have lived!"

"O Mr. Hoopes," says Mrs. Fairfax, laughing, and then with two or three little nods that were meant to dismiss him very courteously, and saying, "You must come again, Mr. Hoopes," she pulled a very little upon the doctor's arm, as though she would go; but he set his feet as you may have seen a jackass do sometimes, and quite pulled the other way; at the same time, turning and glowering upon the innocent cooper like a thunder cloud.

"Why, if it ain't Doctor Allprice!" says the young man, advancing and offering his hand. "Your countenance is so variable that I didn't rightly know it was you, afore, and to speak without warnish, I never saw you when you looked so kind of ornary. Much sickness in the wicinity?"

The doctor just gave the tips of his fingers to Mr. Hoopes, and says, "You were too much taken up with another, sir, to recognize me; but of course you are excusable under the

circumstances." He spoke very dryly, and still kept his head high.

Mr. Hoopes laughed foolishly, and said he certainly had a valid excuse, and then he coughed, and then he wiped his mouth on a long, thin shaving that he had been all the while twisting in his hand, and having thus got the better of his embarrassment, he repeated his question: "You didn't tell me, doctor," says he, "about the sickness; is any violent disorders prevailin' now?"

There the doctor was attacked upon his weak side, and could not resist. There was a good deal of disease, he said, evincing itself, not so much in malignant forms, as in nervous debility, confusion of thoughts, giddiness, nervous headaches, shattered nerves, hypersensitiveness, gout, and dyspepsia.

"Lord!" says the cooper, "that's wariety enough, I should think."

But the doctor, thinking to crush the little cooper quite out, perhaps, went on to say he had one case just now characterized by sometimes a partial, and sometimes a total loss of voluntary motion and sensation, caused, no doubt, by the decreased action of the nerves and capillaries, the vital energies, in consequence, receiving a defective, nervous supply.

"Lawsy mercy!" says the cooper, not knowing what else to say; "a total loss of vitality must be dreadful!"

"You misapprehend," says the doctor; "a total loss of vitality involves liquefaction, dissolution, death. I spoke of a deficient nutritive supply; and allow me to inform you, sir, that every particle of bone, muscle, nerve, vein, artery, gland and membrane must have a new supply of nutritive atoms every day, which necessary supply must be conveyed through the arteries and capillary vessels. You understand then that when these vessels become diseased and unable to convey the nutritive supply to any organ, that part of the human system becomes enfeebled, debilitated, weak, and consequently unable to perform its required duties; hence paralysis, and so many other diseases from which no temperament, age, sex or habit is exempt. Nature is always provident, however, and with the aid of medical skill based on scientific principles, is ever ready to recuperate and re-establish herself; and the proper remedies in the hands of the clinical practitioner, if he be worthy of his profession,

may always be administered without pain, danger, or inconvenience to the patient."

Mr. Hoopes again wiped his mouth on the long, thin shaving he was still twirling and twisting about — very hard, this time, as he said: "I hope, doctor, you'll try and keep Mrs. Fairfax well, if you have got any sure prewentative of disorder, for you must know that she is a wery valuable member of society here."

"I trust I do not require your asseveration upon that point," says the doctor very stiffly.

The cooper was offended. "Miss Fairfax wants no woucher, sir," he said, "neither in me nor you. She ain't a mere stranger into these parts without anything to recommend her except vulgar pertension, as is the case with some; but I merely ventured the observation, without intending offence to anybody."

"And you have'nt given any, neither! has he doctor?" says Mrs. Fairfax, looking up into his face, and at the same time offering a hand to the cooper.

"I'll await myself of your invitation wery soon," says he, "for I would prefer to wisit you when you're alone;" and with a mere nod to the doctor, and crushing the shaving in his hand, he strode proudly away, feeling, to use his own language, that he had come off wictorious.

Perhaps the doctor felt it, too, for he walked in sullen silence.

The widow hung more and more upon his arm till she dragged half her weight there, but still he kept bolt upright, never so much as bending his neck toward her. At last, she says, with a tender reproach in her voice, "What could make you so rude to that man, dear doctor?"

"He's an ignoramus and a bore! but you seemed to find him very entertaining!"

Ignoring the close of the doctor's remark, Mrs. Fairfax said: "But you, my dear doctor, are neither, and therefore — ah, well, let it go — only *the man* meant no harm."

"I dare say not, in your estimation. How often does he *wisit* you, if I may be permitted to know?"

"*Wisit* me! indeed! Now you're too bad, doctor, to be making fun of the poor man in that way."

"I dare be sworn you think it too bad, and I very humbly

beg your pardon ; I shall be careful hereafter, (that is, if I ever see you again,) how I quote the young gentleman ! ”

Mrs. Fairfax, becoming slightly alarmed, applied an emollient. She had had occasion, in the way of business, she said, to meet *that man* a good many times, and she must confess he was rather a bore !

She was careful to say *that man*, every time she spoke of him, in order to put him a great way from her, and a great way below her, but it would not do ; the doctor's jealousy was thoroughly aroused. “ In the way of business ? ” he said, with all the bitterness of irony possible, and then he pulled his hat over his eyes, knit his brows, and relapsed into silence, deep and awful.

“ I'm ashamed of you ! and all about *that man*, too ! it is really so ridiculous. ”

The widow felt herself treading on thorns, but she spoke playfully.

The doctor's head was still high, and his brows all of a black frown, and he protruded uncommonly as he walked.

The thorns were getting very sharp, and Mrs. Fairfax was forced to speak : “ I don't see what the man had to keep us standing an hour for ! ” she said ; the doctor's head still high, the brows still knit, and no reply but silence.

“ Do you ? dear Doctor Allprice. ”

“ Yes, to my sorrow, madam ! ”

Then the widow laughed, and said she supposed she knew, too ; it was all about the mending of that old well-bucket ! She wished she had never thought of getting it mended, but she was a great hand to have everything neat and orderly about her.

“ You cannot deceive me in that way, madam ! the young gentleman is a lover ; an accepted lover, probably. ”

“ That man *my* lover ! I have no lover, my dear doctor, and I never expect to have ; I am, indeed, alone in this cold world. ”

“ Then it's your own fault, for you must repel the young gentleman's advances, I am sure. ”

“ How can you, doctor ! if you only knew how unhappy you make me. ”

“ Make you unhappy ? you, whose heart is all another's ! ” And the doctor's high head came down, and the brow lost its frown and grew suddenly reproachful. Then he said between a sigh and a mutter : —

““ You knew, — but away with the vain retrospection,
The bond of affection no longer endures;
Too late you may droop o’er the fond recollection,
And sigh for the friend who was formerly yours.”

“Cruel !” exclaimed the widow, putting her handkerchief to her eyes, and then she lifted her weight a little from the doctor’s arm, and asked him if she were not growing burdensome.

“Your sylph-like form a burden ?” was all his answer.

Margaret, meanwhile, was stumbling along, with tear-blind eyes, quite forgotten by these old, young people, now that she was out of sight. She was quite oblivious to their conversation, musing to herself as to whether Mr. Lightwail were really very ill, and when he would be able to keep his promise, and whether, indeed, he would keep it at all ; one of which questions was presently answered, for as they passed the parsonage, she saw him sitting in the lamp-light by his study table, and, as far as she was able to judge, looking as well as ever. This did not add to her peace of mind, which had previously been anything but peace, more especially since Katherine Lightwail had made a public proclamation of her love and despair.

She could not get much comfort even from the thought of an interview with Samuel, for she thought that in purpose and intent he had committed murder ; she knew that he was not insane, or that all his madness was his love for her ; and that for his own sake it were better that all things should be as they were, just now ; better an asylum, than a prison. So, whether she spoke out, or whether she withheld herself, she was alike wretched.

Had he suffered no scath, had he been rosy and rollicking, still among the sheep-shearers, it is not unlikely that she would at this time have steeled her heart against him ; but he was overtaken by misfortune, in disgrace, and his treachery was truth to her, and what will not a woman forgive for that ?

“My dear child,” says Mrs. Fairfax, when they were come into the house ; “you are so weary and sick you had better retire at once,” — probably she would have said, “Go to bed,” but for the doctor’s presence, and with a little kiss on her forehead, designed to excite his envy, she dismissed the

drooping, heavy-hearted girl to such rest as she could get out of her embittered solitude. Good, single-minded, and unselfish mother!

By some ways or means, how or what, does not matter, she had contrived to bring the doctor to a yielding mood, though his heart was only as yet softened, not subdued, and, passing over the process, whatever it were, we will take up the conversation at the point it had reached as they seated themselves on the sofa at the moon-lighted window of her parlor.

Would he have a fan? Would he have a glass of wine? Would he have anything that she could offer him?

Her hand, her lily white hand, that was all he would have.

Of course so slight a favor was not refused him, and leaning his cheek upon it he repeated in melancholy tones:—

“Perhaps his peace I could destroy,
And spoil the blisses that await him;
Yet let my rival smile in joy,
For thy dear sake I cannot hate him.”

It will be perceived by this that he was still harping on the cooper.

“So cruel still? and after my assurance too that that man is nothing to me?”

And with her disengaged hand, the widow played demurely with his chain, quite unconsciously, and as though it were her own.

Then he called her a deceitful maid, and said his only hope was that time might teach him to forget her! It had been his curse to worship beauty, and to be scorned; ay, his too susceptible heart was his torment; he had almost believed that he had found rest for its long wanderings at last, but the delusion is over, the charm broken and gone! He was coldly, cruelly dismissed back upon the world, and told that he was as nothing to the dear keeper of his soul. Well, there was yet rest, in the grave. He would pray for inveterate scrofula, erysipelas, salt rheum, or for some other form of ulcerous or eating disease to give him happy release from the torture of his unrequited affections!

“Ah, dear one, live for my sake!”

“For your sake? sweet mocker!”

And then he said with one of those singularly absurd con-

traditions to which despairing lovers are so prone, that he would plunge at once into the giddy crowd, and in its vortex of idle pleasures, force her image, her fair, sylph-like image, (she was fat and more than forty) from his mind and thought forever. Yes, that he would! memory would drive him to madness!

Then he wished he was a wild rover of the forest, hidden in depths of eternal solitude, or a dweller by the sea, drinking in the melancholy music of its never-resting waves, and communing with the fierce spirit of the storm! or that he were a wild hunter, bounding along some rocky mountain side, where never more the rosy cheek of beauty might dazzle with its mocking splendors his too eager eyes. "As it is," he sighed:—

" 'The fiends might pity what I feel
To know that thou art lost forever.' "

And then he said:—

"O how my heart would hate him if he loved thee not!"
Still chafing against the cooper.

He was not proof, however,—what man ever was—against the feminine arts that were brought to bear upon him, and by little and little the awful majesty of his mood gave way, insomuch that his hands began to catch at the fluttering ends of her ribbons as for dear life; and when he spoke again it was with a faint glimmering of hope. Sleep, the friend of the outcast and the weary, would at least be kind, and in dreams and visions of the night it might be given him to see some poor resemblance of the charms of her that was another's! And then he said that even in a dream to be blessed were so sweet, he could ask for no more.

"O you naughty man! You bad, provoking doctor!" and the widow gave him a tender little box on the ear; "as if you had not already read my inmost heart!" She hung down her head, and hid her face against his shoulder. "It must be so, for alas, I am artless and open as any village girl of them all! You know, you know all too well,—but I am dying of confusion."

"Ah, my fair one, I have read your heart too plainly, and find there but one name! The name—but I cannot speak it, my tongue refuses it utterance!"

"Of course you find there but one name, and that is" — She put her hand on his neck, and leaned softly toward him, whispering low, her face almost against his, and then she said, "O Prosper, what will you think of me?" and so dropped all of a heap upon his arm.

"You are only playing with my heart-strings," says the doctor. And then he asks her in very tender whispers if he shall punish the naughty girl with a — a — with a — and he finished the question without words.

"O you wicked creature! how dare you?" And then changing the playfulness of her tone to one of sad reproach, she called him cruel to accuse her of playing with his heart-strings. "As if I could, with your heart-strings, doctor."

"Sweet dissembler, you are not to blame; you only obey a natural impulse; you were created as sportive as the fawn!"

And then he said his spirit was calmer now, and that he would forgive her all, provided she would promise never more to see that hateful cooper!

"But I must!" cries the widow, willing, perhaps, to provoke a little jealousy, now that the prize was secure; and suddenly sitting up very straight: "Iron hoops don't come for nothing, you know, and then the cooper has been so very good to me all along, he must be paid, and that promptly, and you must not be jealous, neither, you big bear."

"Send him to me then, with his account," says the doctor, proudly.

She gave a little start. "Mercy! you would have everybody talking about us; don't you see?"

"Let them talk! but do you shrink after all?"

"From what, pray, dear doctor?"

"My dear girl, one favor, call me Prosper."

And then he explained that he feared she shrank from having her name connected with his, and that it weighed upon his heart like lead.

Then the widow intimated that there might be circumstances; but that, as she was situated, a lone woman, with no one to guard her reputation, it were best that she should pay for the mending of her own well-bucket.

"That is," she said, "unless — well, in short, unless I had the right of" —

"Wise, careful angel!" cries the enraptured doctor; "you shall have the right of" —

Then, having settled his collar, and re-arranged his hair, he said with the tone of authority, that the lips that made him beauty's slave, should command him in all things else; but as for that wretched, insolent boor, the bucket-mender, he must positively forbid her ever seeing him again!

"Upon what authority, my dear Prosper? As my friend, or my physician? or my — my — but you will think me so bold!"

"You bold! you timid dove, that are all made up of modesty." And then he said, laughing foolishly, and speaking in the eye of the widow, instead of her ear, "by the authority of your — your — your" — here he broke down, and said he would conclude with another — but she gave him a little tap on the chin, and told him he must wait till after!

Then he answered that he couldn't wait till after, — not with her tempting mouth so near him, — and that he must now!

This was perhaps what she wished to hear, but she nevertheless made a show of coyness, and told him if it was really and truly impossible for him to restrain the ardor of his affections until after — why, why it must be very soon, though she hardly knew how to bring herself to think of it at all; she had never meant to, never!

"And you never would, would you? if you had not found your Prosper?"

"How can you ask it?"

"But you will now? Say you will, once more. O, Margaret, when shall it be?"

Then he shook hands with her ear instead of the customary way, and after several vain attempts finally departed.

"Mercy on us! what a dunce he is!" said the widow, in her heart, and she flounced off to bed. The following day she sent him a faded daguerrotype of herself, taken when she was at least a score of years younger, and he returned her the subjoined lines, written in blue ink, and upon deeply-tinted and gilt-edged paper: —

TO MY OWN, ON RECEIVING HER PICTURE.

"This faint resemblance of thy charms,
Though strong as mortal art can give,
My constant heart of fear disarms,
Revives my hope, and bids me live.

"Sweet copy! far more dear to me,
Lifeless, unfeeling as thou art,
Than all the living forms can be,
Save her who placed thee next my heart.

"She placed it sad, with needless fear,
Lest time might shake my wavering soul,
Unconscious that her image there
Had every sense in fast control.

"Through hours, through years, through time, t'will cheer,
My hope in gloomy moments raise;
In life's last conflict 'twill appear,
And meet my fond expiring gaze."

And to this was added: "Forgive, dear girl, my melancholy; so dazzling a hope must needs beget fear, and love was ever allied to gloom."

But perhaps the key-note of his despondency was in the following line:—

"P. S. Remember, wayward fawn, your promise not to see *him* again, until after! Remember, O remember!"

If the reader imagines that I have attempted to represent Dr. Allprice as a fool, then I have failed of my purpose; he was in love, simply, that is all, and I here set down for serious meditation what Benedict says to Claudio:—

"I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviors to love, will, after he has laughed at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn by falling in love; and such a man is Claudio. I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and fife; and now he had rather bear the tabor and the pipe; I have known when he would have walked ten mile afoot to see a good armor; and now he will lie ten nights awake, carving the fashion of a new doublet. He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man, and a soldier; and now is he turned orthographer: his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. May I be converted and see with these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not: I will not be sworn, but love may transform me to an oyster; but I'll take my oath on it, till he have made an oyster of me, he shall never make me such a fool."

Perhaps every man who is out of love thinks pretty much after this fashion of his friend who is in love, though said friend, it may be supposed, is always careful to make the

best of it : that is, to cover his insanity as cunningly as possible ; and certain it is, that the language of lovers may not be written or told ; no story-writer has been bold enough to attempt this, I think, unless with great modifications.

And having said thus much for my own delineament, and for the sake of the doctor, who I am afraid does not appear in a very fortunate light, I once more join my broken thread, and make haste to spin along with my narrative.

Two of our characters, then, are brought to the acme of human felicity ; they are in love, and " engaged."

And by all the accepted rules, therefore, little more should be said of them ; certainly, nothing more need be said at present.

CHAPTER XI.

RAT FIGHTING



DAY went by, and another day, and Mr. Lightwait did not present himself to fulfil his promise to Margaret, nor did he send any apology, nor was there anything heard of him. Hours upon hours she sat at the window looking toward the parsonage in the hope that she would see him coming, or at any rate, see him in the garden, or about the door-yard of his house ; but when, by chance, she at last saw a man about the grounds, it happened that it was twilight, and she could not tell whether or not it was he. Meantime, rumors kept coming in about Samuel. At one time, that he was mad past all hope, tearing his hair by handfuls from his head, his clothing from his body, and being dangerous, even to his keeper ; another time, that he appeared as sane as ever ; had denied all knowledge of the murder ; talked freely and intelligently upon all subjects ; and for his diversion had betaken himself to basket-making ! Still another report represented him as wild-eyed, sick and drooping, and

as having muttered in his sleep of some bloody murder done long ago at sea ; and of a box of gold that was buried under one of Mrs. Whiteflock's haystacks. Luther Larky, it was said, had upset the stacks supposed to conceal the treasure, on account of its nearness to the woods, and had digged all night, by moonlight, having had only his trouble for his pains.

These conflicting reports, coming to her, as she was isolated from all comfort and sympathy, nearly drove poor Margaret distracted. If it had been her privilege to go to Samuel, to show forth her love by word or deed, it would have been such a mitigation of her grief, but no such privilege was accorded her ; and as for claiming it, she could as easily have set her feeble strength against the tide of the ocean.

Heaven pity the woman that, for any reason, is forbidden to speak of her love ; she had as well have fire in her bosom.

She had at first felt the greatest satisfaction in the belief that Mr. Lightwait was ignorant of her secret ; but as the time passed and the concealed fire gnawed deeper and deeper, she was resolved almost, to go to him and uncover the living death, and entreat his pity — his help.

With this thought in her heart, she approached his grounds night after night as she walked in the fields to fetch home the cows ; but she no sooner found herself coming near to him, than startled from her purpose, and afraid, she fled away as fast as her feet would carry her. But when the pressure of any misfortune becomes heavy enough, we must needs speak or die, and Margaret had almost got her courage to the sticking point, when the pressure was slightly lifted ; a three-cornered and sweetly scented little note came from Mr. Lightwait, addressed to her mother, to be sure, but still with reference to herself. It ran as follows :

“ My sweet Sister Fairfax : When I was under your hospitable roof, a day or two since,” (he had not been under the roof at all, remember), “ I had the rashness to make a proposal to your little daughter which I have not the courage to carry out without your permission. But to come at once to the head and front of my offending, I proposed to take her to see our unfortunate brother, Samuel

Dale, of whom, by the way, I hear sad accounts. It seemed to me that it might gratify the childish fondness she appears to feel for him, and do no harm, but you, of course, are the best judge of this, and on second thoughts I have been led to distrust my first impulse; but the little darling has a strange power upon me, and I could not see her suffering without at least seeking to relieve it. If you approve of my suggestion I will report myself for duty in a day or two, so soon as I shall be well enough, and, as I am in the skilful hands of Dr. Allprice, I entertain the most sanguine hopes. If you do not approve, pray forgive me, and believe me, in the deepest penitence,

Your humble brother and devoted servant."

He did not sign his name in full, but simply, or rather not simply, "Lightwait."

Mrs. Fairfax could not tell just why, but somehow she felt flattered by the signature. She read the note again and again, and then she meditated in silence a long while, and then she re-read it and, finally having borrowed pen, ink and paper of Margaret, sat herself to the task of composing a reply. She essayed her powers upon unruled paper at first, but this baffled her utmost skill, and, having spoiled several sheets, she came down to ruled lines, and after much labor achieved a reply — not satisfactory, but tolerable.

His proposal was very kind, and Margaret's childish fondness for the unfortunate young man referred to, would, she had no doubt, be gratified by its execution, and she sincerely hoped he would be able to report himself very soon. And so she took leave to send her little daughter to him, with her acceptance, knowing that his spiritual-mindedness and godly conversation must have the happiest effect upon the morbid condition to which the late excitements had reduced her.

With much love to Miss Lightwait, she was, &c., &c.

This was the substance of what she wrote, what she thought, was another thing; but if it had been written would have run somewhat as follows: He has been rash enough to make one ridiculous proposal, this bishop's son; perhaps, all things concurring, he will be rash enough to make another; we will give him the opportunity; besides,

Margaret cannot but contrast Sam Dale unfavorably with this great man, if she have but the chance. "Pride above all things strengthens the affections." So says one who knows a good deal of the human heart, and Mrs. Fairfax had, somehow, arrived at the same conclusion. She had some fears, it is not unlikely, of the interview with Samuel, but hope was strong too, and she played for a high stake, and must risk something.

The sun was set, and the cool, red clouds drifted to high fantastic heaps above the western hills, and the shadows beginning to creep dimly out from the borders of the woods, when she put the note in Margaret's hand with instructions to carry it at once to the parsonage. "And mind, dear," she said, "it is not to be trusted with any one but Mr. Lightwait himself, so be sure you ask to see him."

"Yes, mother," and Margaret's face was all aglow as, taking her hood from the wall, she was flying out of the door.

"Stop, foolish child! stop! not in that old dress, surely, and just see your hair!" But Margaret was out of hearing, her hair tumbled, her face flushed, and her blue gingham gown slipping off one shoulder.

"Mercy, mercy! she will spoil it all!" cries Mrs. Fairfax.

"O, dear, good Mr. Lightwait, he is going to take me to see Samuel after all!" And she flew faster and faster, across the hollow, along the slope, where they had gathered the daisies in the moonlight, past the sheltered nook where the tender confession had been made, all close to the garden, all in the garden, where, as if struck suddenly dumb, she stood still, her eyes staring wide, and the hot blood in her cheek dropping cold and heavy to her heart. She had expected to find her pastor in his study, pale, sad and sick, his religious books about him, and his mind composed to heavenly contemplations; and was that he before her? vigor in all his attitude, and the hot eager glow of mad excitement flushing in his cheek, and giving an animal expression to his mouth and eyes. There was a deep scratch across the back of one hand, and the wristband had some splashes of fresh blood upon it, his hat was tumbled in the grass, and seemed to have been rolled about a good deal, for bits of dead leaves and dry grasses were sticking to it, his coat was off, and thrown over a bush at hand, his waist-

coat was unbuttoned, and his hair dashed away from his forehead, as she had never seen it till then. He was stooping forward, his hands resting upon his thighs, and gazing intently into what seemed to be a rough wooden box, that stood near by.

A small black terrier was barking and snapping from between his legs, and altogether he looked so little like the saintly man that was used to clasp his white hands over the Bible, of a Sunday, that it was no wonder Margaret stood still. She could hear a dull thrumming and thumping inside the box, now against one side and now the other, and a clawing and scratching and squealing that frightened her; nor was her terror lessened when, drawing near, still unperceived, she looked down into the box and beheld the ghastly white teeth, writhing tails, torn shoulders, and bloody heads of a couple of fighting rats!

And this was the business that so transformed and absorbed the gentle, pious pastor.

For a moment, he stood abashed before the modest face of the young girl, and then his brow clouded, and he bit his lips, more as if in anger with her than ashamed of himself.

"And what procures me this unexpected pleasure, at this hour?" he said, as he dashed on his coat, and thrust back out of sight the blood-specked wristband.

It was as if the hour was very ill-chosen, and Margaret felt rebuked and mortified, but at the same time quite conscious of her advantage. She said, therefore, emboldened partly by her advantage, partly by a just feeling of indignation: "The hour, Mr. Lightwait, suited my convenience. I am only sorry it doesn't suit yours." And she glanced significantly at the box.

Then Mr. Lightwait said it was not of his own convenience he was thinking — it would be convenient for him to see her at any hour, but he feared from the appearance of the clouds that rain was approaching, and if she should happen to be caught in a thunder storm, why! it would be dreadful.

She smiled, glancing at the box again, as though she would say a thunder storm were much less dreadful than that.

Then she spoke out, "I came to fetch you this, from

mother," and she presented the note, and was turning away, but he detained her.

"No, my pet, the rain is not so imminent, and I have something special to say."

"Here, Dick," he called to his man, who was at work in another part of the garden, "come and make an end of these mad fellows—I am heartily sick of the sight of them." And then, doubtless for Margaret's especial benefit, "I don't know why he should have put the nasty things in my way, at any rate,—such a horrible sight."

But as Dick approached, he went close to him and spoke low, so low that she could not hear distinctly what he said, but from the man's answer, which was that the critter's were good for a dozen turns yet, she could not help fearing that his orders were to keep them for another fight. It is possible, however, that her fears misled her, and that the instructions were of a more merciful character. And so let us hope.

"What if my house be troubled with a rat, and I be pleased to give ten thousand ducats to have it baned?"

And with this soliloquy he took Margaret's hand, and led her to another part of the grounds, and having seated her within an arbor of tangling vines, he went on:—

"So I can give no reason, nor I will not, more than a lodged hate and a certain loathing I bear Antonio, that I follow thus a losing suit against him."

Then he opened the note, cutting the wafer loose with his knife, and blowing the particles aside with his breath, as though they offended him; and as he read, he frowned and bit his lip, as though he were disappointed, or displeased, or both. He folded it at last, and then he said to Margaret, "You know what this is, my dear?" And on her replying in the negative, he told her what it was, and expressed himself delighted with the privilege of putting his little plan into execution. "And so, my darling," he concluded gayly, "you have nothing to do but name the day."

"To-morrow?"

"Yes—perhaps—let me see! What did brother Timpson say about his dearborn? O, I know! he wants to use it himself to-morrow."

"Then you have seen him about it?"

"Why, to be sure, and I should have seen you too, and kept my promise, but I have been sick, you know."

"Very sick? because you are looking so well to-night."

"Ah, thank you, even for false coin, but I can repay you in genuine; and truly I never saw you so charming as in this simple gown; and then your hair! why the winds have dressed it for you, to perfection! And what splendid waiting maids they are, to be sure, with their soft hands and delicate perfumes; I wish we never required any other; I wish we had some sweet little isle of our own, where we might live—well, as Adam and Eve did in the garden. Suppose now, as the scenery is so fitting, we play their parts, just for an hour. What say you, my beautiful Eve?" He touched her bright head at this, and then, as if by chance, the hand slid to the neck, and finally to the rosy, dimpled shoulder, where it rested. Then he began repeating passages from *Paradise Lost*.

"So passed they naked on, nor shunned the sight
Of God or angel; for they thought no ill;
So hand in hand they passed, the loveliest pair
That ever since in love's embraces met;
Adam the godliest man of men since born
His sons, the fairest of her daughters, Eve.
Under a turf of shade that on a green
Stood whispering soft, by a fresh fountain side
They sat them down, and after no more toil
Of their sweet gardening labor than sufficed
To recommend cool zephyr and made ease
More easy, wholesome thirst and appetite
More grateful, to their supper fruits they sped,
Nectarine fruits which the complaisant boughs
Yielded them, sidelong as they sat reclined
On the soft, downy bank damask with flowers:
The savory pulp they chew, and in the rind,
Still as they thirsted, scoop the brimming stream;
Nor gentle purpose nor endearing smiles
Wanted, nor youthful dalliance, as be seems
Fair couple linked in happy nuptial league
Alone, as they."

Margaret who had waited impatiently, said, when he paused, "If not to-morrow, when? that is, if we are to go at all?"

"So you are still a-tiptoe to see your Samuel?" he answered, with an almost reproachful look of his sad eyes, and tightening the clasp of his hand a little upon the shrinking shoulder.

"Our Samuel." And Margaret dropped her eyes and blushed.

"Your correction makes me happy, my dear; do you know I was half jealous of that handsome rascal?" still

clasping the shoulder, and praising its roseate beauty with his eyes.

Margaret drew up her sleeve, the blush deepening, quite over her neck, and turned slightly away. Then he cried, half gayly, half petulantly,

"My fairest, my espoused, my latest found,
Heaven's last best gift, my ever new delight !
Why frownest thou thus on thy disconsolate Adam ?
Come, dear, ' We lose the prime to mark how spring
Our tender plants, how blows the citron grove,
What drops the myrrh, and what the balmy reed,
How nature paints her colors, how the bee
Sits on the bloom extracting liquid sweets.' "

"Come, such whisperings waked Eve in the old time, and will it not arouse, and bring my little Eve back to herself? "

She hung her head, and pouted in silence, and he went on:—

"Now is the pleasant time,
The cool, the silent, save where silence yields
To the night warbling bird, that now awake,
Tunes sweetest his love-labored song; now reigns,
Full orb'd the moon, and with more pleasing light
Shadowy sets off the face of things; in vain,
If none regard."

"But, come, it is time you should begin your part; I will prompt."

O, soul, in whom my thoughts find all repose,
My glory, my perfection! Glad I see
Thy face."

"Come, why don't you begin? and Eve, you must know, embraced Adam as she said this; you are not playing your part well, my dear, not at all."

"I am not playing any part." And with her lip trembling and her eyes glistening with tears, Margaret stood up, and said she would go home. He put his arm around her waist, and drew her to his knee, kissed her, and calling her his poor vexed child, said he would not plague her any more, no he wouldn't, and nobody should; nobody nowhere. Then he said he would go to the house and fetch his umbrella and walk home with her, and they would arrange matters by the way.

When he was gone she felt tempted to run away; but she thought it would look ill-bred and rude, and as she dreaded

nothing so much as that, she remained, against her judgment and her will, as it were. She could not get the images of the bloody rats out of her mind, and then the part her pastor had pretended to play, though its significance was not very clear, annoyed her. She had parsed a little in *Paradise Lost*, at school, and knew it was in Father Goodman's library, and so her dissatisfaction was, in some sort, satisfied.

It was a good while before Mr. Lightwait returned, and, meantime, the clouds that shone in a rosy bank along the west when she set out from home, had grown gray, and then black, and finally overrun half the sky, and rain threatened every moment.

"We must hurry," Margaret said, putting on her hood.

"No, it is too late for that; see yonder!"

Sure enough, there was a gray streak of falling rain along the ridge between Mrs. Whiteflock's house and her mother's.

He sat down, contentedly as could be, and pulled Margaret down beside him, and then began to hum to her, —

"Will you come to the bower I have shaded for you?
Your bed shall be roses bespangled with dew.
Will you come, darling? Say, will you come?"

"We had better go now," Margaret said. "Maybe, it will rain all night; the clouds look like it."

"Suppose it does; our bower will protect us, therefore —

"Daughter of God and man, accomplished Eve,
Be not affrighted."

"But you said you would not plague me any more."

"Plague you! not for the world; but surely the beautiful thoughts of our immortal Milton cannot plague you. Just hear: —

"In shadier bower
Pan or Sylvanus never slept, nor nymph
Nor Faunus haunted. Here, in close recess,
With flowers, garlands, and sweet-smelling herbs,
Espoused Eve decked first her nuptial bed,
And heavenly choirs the hymenean sung."

"But I did not come to hear Milton; I came" —

"Ah, my little Eve, you came about your Samuel, didn't you?"

"My Samuel, again! Well, if you like to have it so."

"I don't like to have it so; but let me tell you about my visit to Brother Timpson; isn't he a queer chap? he calls all his d's like j's. For instance, when I asked him about the dearborn, he said he was almost immejiately going to Injianapolis, Injiana; an ojious journey, to be sure, but it must be took, and so he would have use for his dearbin!"

And then he added, still mimicking Brother Timpson, "I suppose that was injubitably true, for what could injuce our good neighbor to deny me his mejium of conveyance, otherwise?" He wondered whether this ijiom of Brother Timpson would not be effective in the pulpit. And then he laughed, and continued to laugh till he saw by Margaret's still, pale face that she was shocked and astonished, when he said he meant no harm — he thought Brother Timpson a most estimable man, but to say the truth, he did think one of his children pretty nearly an ijiot! And then he said he referred to Miss Thally Timpson, who he was thorry to thay was just now very thick! And so he fell laughing again.

"By the way, do you know Sister Timpson? She's a power in the church, and I may say in the world, isn't she?"

She was a little, pale-eyed, meek woman, with thin hair and a freckled face; a person who never went out of her own doors, and who was afraid of her own voice.

"She did not speak directly to me, during my stay, but I must give her the credit to say that she did speak for my benefit. She took little Thally on her knees and told her to tell the gentleman that a little flaxseed tea would be good for his cold; and that he would find it healin' and soothin' and coolin' and quietin', which I took to be a very kind thing of her. It came to me, however, in the regular way, and was not transmitted through her little daughter Thally, as she desired, that modest young damsel preferring to hide her apple cheeks in the maternal bosom — a position from which, on my own personal account, I had no disposition to dislodge her."

Still Margaret sat in sad, rebuking silence, and suddenly changing his manner, and placing his hand gently upon her's, he said: "My child, I perceive in all things you are too superstitious. Did you ever read that chapter of the Acts of the Apostles; the fourteenth, I think it is, where it tells how Paul and Barnabas rent their clothes, and ran in among

the people, crying out, "We also are men with like passions with you" ?

"O the prejudice of men and women too!" And then he said, very sadly —

"And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved."

And then he sighed, and said the world was not advanced one whit since that day, and after a little silence repeated the subjoined text: —

"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of men's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing of myself; yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord."

The rain was falling slowly on the leaves above their heads, and the winds made little stirs among them, that were sadder than silence; it was not yet wholly dark, but the twilight just hung on the edge of night, giving to all things that uncertain gloom that is more impressive than light or darkness.

"Shall we pray?" he said, when he spoke again, and all at once, dropping on his knees, and veiling his face, he began to pray, using the Lord's prayer, and pausing to repeat twice, and with great unction, "Lead us not into temptation." After the amen, he took Margaret by the hand, and said, "Now let us go home;" and so he led her all the way, as though she had been a little child, talking chiefly on religious subjects, and seeming to be altogether in a contrite and devout frame of mind.

At her mother's door he took formal, almost cold leave of her, and as he turned back in the darkness and the rain, she stood looking after him, wistfully, almost tenderly.

CHAPTER XII.

GOSSIP.



HE waves of the ocean do not succeed and obliterate one another more constantly and surely than do the waves of thought and feeling, interest and emotion, in the affairs of life; and ten days were hardly gone since the arrest and imprisonment of Samuel Dale, for his confinement among lunatics amounted to nothing less than imprisonment, when the neighborhood was thrown into a new state of excitement by the report that a travelling show was giving exhibitions in the neighboring city, Cincinnati, and would, within a fortnight, at farthest, make a halt at Bloomington.

"Heard the news, Mrs. Fairfax?" inquired the butcher, leaning over the door-yard fence one morning, and suffering the heifer he was leading by the horn to nibble the short bunch grass by the wayside.

"News? No. Anybody sick or dead?" she replied dropping her pruning-knife and hurrying toward him. And here it may as well be stated that the expulsive power of her new affection (?) for Dr. Allprice had pretty nearly driven every other interest from her mind; her inquiry, therefore, was perfectly in the order of her thoughts.

Then Mr. Stake, the butcher, told all about the great show that was coming.

"Busy times for me, Mrs. Fairfax, busy times enough! Why mem it'll take a dozen critters a day to feed the beasts agreeable to what I hear tell, to say nothing of the gentlemen showmen, musicians and all, and they do say some of the birds eats meat!"

"Is it possible! I never heard of such a thing!" cries Mrs. Fairfax; "and I don't believe the doctor ever did — I'll

ask him — of course he knows about birds and things, in the way of his profession."

"Dr. Allprice, you mean? Well, I can't say that I believe in him over and above, sense that affair here t'other night. Why, if it hadn't a been for Peter Whiteflock your girl might 'a' died, I reckon. When big words comes in there's apt for to be a split, and common sense generally goes t'other way! That's my notion, but maybe 'tain't your'n."

"As for big words," replied Mrs. Fairfax, stiffly, I might as well blame you for using your butcher-knife—they belong to the profession. And as for my daughter, it was the doctor's medicine, and not the effect of anything that Peter did, which brought her out of her fainting fit, I can tell you!"

Mr. Stake coughed to hide his confusion; but, not feeling satisfied with his success, took up the tail of the heifer and with it brushed away some dust from the knees of his trowsers, and then he coughed again, almost choking this time, and then he said he didn't know but he'd have to get some doctor-stuff himself; and so with a laugh and another switch of the brush, he brought himself round—not that he was in the least convinced of an error of judgment, but simply because he found it hard to breast the current that set so strongly against him.

"You was a-speakin' about sickness," he remarked, when he again found voice, quite falling in with the tenor of Mrs. Fairfax's thought—"did you happen to know that Peter Whiteflock had a bad turn, day afore yesterday, it strikes me it was."

"Why no! Serious, was it, so as to require medicine?"

"Well, yes, they did send for Dr. Dosum, but they couldn't get him; he has such an awful big practice, you know, and then they sent for Allprice, bein' as they couldn't get t'other; and so I s'pose he'll have the case; doctors generally hold on, you know. I only hope he'll know how to treat him—that's all."

And then he remarks that Peter is a man, that he is peculiar; "he ain't even sick like nobody else," he says. And then he explains that he seemed to have fallen into a fit of some kind; that he was found lying on the ground stiff as a bull's tail. "And don't you think," says he, "that that old mare o' his'n, Posey, had poked her nose into his shirt-bosom,

and was a-licking away for dear life!" Adding with almost fatal thoughtlessness: "Some thinks that was what brung him to."

"A likely story, to be sure!" says Mrs. Fairfax.

"Yes, just as you say, a likely story!" chimes in the butcher; "and after all the doctor-stuff he took, too!"

"People are so absurd," says Mrs. Fairfax.

"So absurd people is, you are quite right there; but the warm tongue o' the brute might, possibly, you know."

"Nonsense! the idea!"

"Yes, 'tis a strange idea; some entertains it though."

"Of course, we know better."

"Of course."

Then Mr. Stake said he noticed the doctor's horse at Mr. Whiteflock's gate that morning as he was going out to look for creatures in his line o' business.

"At Mr. Whiteflock's did you say?" inquired Mrs. Fairfax.

"Yes," replied the butcher, not having noticed the emphasis placed on the Mr. "Yes, as I was out to look for creatures," and then he said, sympathetically, "a doctor must have a hard life of it, being broke of his rest and all;" that it was hardly daylight when he sot out to look for the creatures, and that the doctor had already been dragged out of bed.

"Are you sure it was *his* horse?" says Mrs. Fairfax, "and not Dr. Dosum's?"

And then she asks, perhaps to draw out something further in reference to the doctor, for what cause he himself had happened to be stirring so early.

"On account of the creatures," says the butcher. "You see I don't know where I may light o' one; and it'll take a powerful sight to feed the show-beasts, Bengal tiger and all, to say nothing of the birds, which with 'em the eating of meat is doubtful you think."

He used the word creature no doubt, in deference to Mrs. Fairfax, and as being more euphonious than cattle.

Mrs. Fairfax had heard that bats would eat mice; but then bats was no sign, she said; they wasn't one thing nor t'other, with their great leather wings! She had heard the doctor say there were no bats in the part of the country he came from and she didn't think there ought to be, anywhere.

The butcher quite agreed with her; "they are nasty things," he said, "a-comin' a-dashin' into the house o' nights like their heads was off, and scarin' a-body!" he was glad to know there was anywheres where there was no bats!

This was meant to be a delicate compliment to the doctor, and was so received. Mrs. Fairfax felt so kindly toward him that she immediately inquired after his family.

"The children was all able to eat their portion," he said, "especially if there happened to be a choice part of a choice creature on the table; but his *lady* was complaining some."

"She needs medicine I dare say," was the comment of Mrs. Fairfax. And Mr. Stake said he would tell his lady which it was the opinion of Mrs. Fairfax that she needed medicine, and he hoped she might be induced to see Dr. Allprice.

"I do hope so! the dear little woman!" cries Mrs. Fairfax. And then she says the doctor's medicine has the most magical effect upon—some! She hesitated before pronouncing the last word of the sentence, and it is probable that she had intended to conclude with a personal pronoun; but somehow the broad daylight, and the *creature* standing by the fence-side, operated as a check, and caused her to give her remark a more general application.

"Maybe," says the butcher, casting up a sheep's eye; "maybe his medicines is particular adapted to your case! not that I mean to say he ain't a good doctor."

"O, Mr. Stake, you naughty man!" cries Mrs. Fairfax, blushing and giving the strings of her cap a little flirt. "What put such nonsense into your head, to be sure!" And then she says the doctor and she are good friends, the best of friends, indeed; but that there is nothing but friendship between them.

"I have seen things which they was nothing but friendship in the beginning that they turned out fur otherways!" says the butcher, laughing, and switching the tail of the cow which he still held in his hand, this way and that, with great energy, in order to adjust himself to his own audacity.

"Did you ever! Why you get worse and worse, Mr. Stake," cries the widow, radiant with delight. And then she says she has a great mind to patronize the butcher at the other end of the town, and so retaliate upon Mr. Stake.

By this time the relation between them had become so

amicable that the butcher ventured to let go the cow's tail and rest himself for support entirely upon the fence.

"You patronize the butcher at the other end of the town, indeed!" says he, laughing as though it were a fine joke—"a dealer in old sheep, corned beef and liver! Ah, I'll trust you for that—there is some that don't know what's what, and there is some that does, and you're one of 'em." And then he said his class of customers was the class which it was the same that Dr. Allprice belonged to—"none o' your common sort, no mam!"

They talked of the weather, the crops, the prices, Mrs. Fairfax through all making constant allusion in one way or another to Dr. Allprice. For instance, when Mr. Stake remarked that it looked like for rain, she replied that it was fortunate the doctor had a top buggy! and when he remarked that vegetables was high that season, she answered that the doctor did not eat vegetables—he didn't think they was healthy. The fact being that no subject could have been introduced, no matter how far away at first, that would not have led directly back to the doctor.

They gossipped a little about the neighbors. Mrs. Rhineland had got a new high-post bedstead that was reported to have cost fifteen dollars; though Mr. Stake gave it as his opinion that it had not cost so much; "folks always make out a big story," said he. Then he said that his lady had seen it, and she didn't think it was so very much better than their'n, that cost only nine dollars. Miss P. Goke, the milliner, was going to raise her half story up, so folks said, and going to take boarders; and who did Mrs. Fairfax s'pose she was going to take? Why, M. Hoops, the cooper, for one! Whether she was going to take him for good and all nobody knew, and he s'posed it was nobody's business, and he was sure he didn't care what Miss P. Goke did, but as a general rule, he thought it best for a body to stick to one trade, and it did seem as if bonnets and boarders didn't go good together.

John Huff, the tanner, that he lost his wife only last November—the tenth, he thought it was—had stripped the crape off his hat, and stuck a little straw concern sideways on to his head, just to make him look young. "Don't you think, Miss Fairfax," said Mr. Stake, "that Huff came to my place t'other day to see if I had anything in his line,

— from my creatures, you know — our business brings us together now and then, and instead of comin' through the gate like a white man, he puts his hand on to the top bar and bounces over the fence like a young spark. I give him to understand that I didn't approve of such capers."

Mrs. Fairfax did not know Mr. Huff at all, but she did know that when a man of his class lost one wife, he was pretty likely to act the fool till he got another. And then Mr. Stake hastened to explain that he was no ways intimate with John Huff — "his business is not up to mine," he said, "but the creatures, you see, occupy a kind of middle ground that we meet on to it sometimes."

And then he said, Huff wasn't the only man in Bloomington, that he was a comin' out a butterfly; Sole, the shoemaker, had thrown that little back room into his front shop, and stuck up a red screen catcornered like, so that the ladies could try on their shoes without being exposed — he reckoned that was the idee, anyhow.

"City notions is a creepin' onto us mighty fast," says Mr. Stake, and then he says that Cincinnati is about the finest town in the whole world, he reckons, but for all that he doesn't know as he wants to live there; Bloomington is quite fine enough for him. And then he asks Mrs. Fairfax if she knows that the Whiteflocks have sot up a carriage?

"A carriage! Lord bless my soul, no! What sort of a carriage? Anything like the doctor's?"

"Well, no, it ain't like the doctor's — it's bigger and there's more heft to it accordin' to its size; it's lined with blue, and the curtains of it is regular silk, but I hain't had the honor to be no nearer to it than I am now. I hear the talk, that's all, and they say it cost a mint o' money."

"I wonder if the old mare, Posey, is to be driven to it?" says Mrs. Fairfax with a little sneer, and then she laughs and sneers outright, and says she wonders if Peter will be taken out much for his health! And then she wonders Sister Whiteflock doesn't enlarge her house, withal; "big as it is, it isn't big enough," she says; "she has to use the cellar, you know!"

"Well, now, I reckon that's Peter's fault, purty much, if not altogether," says Mr. Stake.

"Peter's fiddlestick!" was all the answer Mrs. Fairfax made to this suggestion. It was too supremely ridiculous.

"You women — ladies, I mean," says the butcher, "is always hard onto one another," and then he says Mrs. Whiteflock is able to have a carriage, and it doesn't cost anybody a red cent, except herself; he wishes her well, for his part.

"Dear me, and so do I, I hope," and then Mrs. Fairfax says, that nobody can esteem Sister Whiteflock higher than she — that she considers her, in fact, as one of the excellent of the earth, and wouldn't for the world say a word to her disparagement; but after all, she does think some of Sister Whiteflock's ways are a little queer!

"Them high bows on her bonnet, for a woman of her years, and the mother of she don't know how many children! Why, she can hardly get into the meetin'-house sometimes, with all her furbelows."

And then Mrs. Fairfax says, almost under breath, "Between you and me, Mr. Stake, if Sister Whiteflock wasn't Sister Whiteflock, she'd a' been disciplined in the class-meeting long enough before this time, for her overmuch finery, and — well, I won't say!"

"Now you ladies is too bad!" says the butcher, again.

"Maybe so," answers Mrs. Fairfax, and then she asks him with a little tap of her fore-finger upon his hand, if he has had the pleasure to see Luther Larky lately; adding with the bitterest sarcasm that she thinks young Luther Larky a hopeful case! and then she laughs and tosses her cap ribbons over her shoulders and says this is a funny world.

"It's a world that it's uncharitable," says Mr. Stake, and then he went on to say that he himself had thought strange of some of Mrs. Whiteflock's ways sometimes in the days that they was gone, but that her noble and magnanimous conduct upon a certain occasion which he had had occasion to have with her, that it called her up out of her — he would say that it called her from her retirement at the solemn midnight hour, had convinced him that some of the things he had thought, was things that they wasn't true. "She treated us with perfect luxuriance," remarked Mr. Stake, "upon the occasion that we had occasion to have it, and I take that as a test of good temper, anyhow, because that it's aggravating to most ladies to be called from their retirement onseasonable. Why, even a creature will hook a feller," says he, "that has roused up onseasonable."

Mrs. Fairfax soon fixed the occasion, and this done she

drew forth all the particulars, by a little leading and management, and when she knew about the brandy and the rest of it, she shook her head ominously, as much as to say she put her own interpretation upon Mrs. Whiteflock's conduct upon the occasion, and an interpretation differing materially from that of the butcher.

"You men are so easy took in," she says, and then she asks innocently if Sister Whiteflock buys her butcher's meat of Mr. Stake. She inquires, she says, because she has seen her, or Luther Larky, which is the same thing, buying occasionally of that upstart at the other end of the town. It did not occur to her that this insinuation betrayed herself, but it did occur to the butcher, and besides, he had too vivid a recollection of the peach brandy to permit any new prejudice from taking root in his mind. He thought he must be getting along with his creature, he said, shading his eyes with his hand and looking at the sun, and then he asked Mrs. Fairfax to call and see his lady, and he added they would try and give her something to keep her from starvin', if she stayed with 'em half a day."

Mrs. Fairfax thanked him, and said she didn't visit much, her church duties and one thing and another occupied most of her time, but she would make it a point to see Mrs. Stake, if possible.

"Well, now, you must try and come!" says the butcher; my lady'll be quite made up to have a visit from you."

"You are very good to say so, and I shall certainly make it a point."

"You must make it a pint and make it soon too."

"Thank you, I will try to make it soon, Mr. Stake."

"Well, if you only try you can."

"I shall do my best, certainly."

"Now, you'll be sure."

"Quite sure, I think."

"Well, then, I'll tell my lady, and she'll expect you. Don't forget it!"

"I will not forget, and Mrs. Stake shall not be disappointed."

"What day shall I tell my lady to look for you?"

Mrs. Fairfax does not know that she is prepared just then to name a day.

"O, but you must," says the butcher. "Ladies likes to know when ladies is goin' to call on 'em."

"Then we will say Wednesday; the doctor says he always has good luck on that day; besides its market day, and I can kill two birds with one stone, you see."

"Ha, ha! Very good! Then you'll come and no fail, Miss Fairfax?"

"No failure, unless something unforeseen should happen, which is not likely."

"Which it is not likely; but you musn't forget, will you now, Miss Fairfax?"

"O, no, Mr. Stake, the doctor says he never forgets an invitation, and I don't neither."

"Then my lady may depend on seeing you?"

"Yes, to be sure."

"I'll tell her so, then."

"Of course."

"Come early, Mrs. Fairfax."

"Yes."

"And stay and take a bite with us — we'll try to give you something you can swallow."

Mrs. Fairfax, who had been retreating backward slowly and suggestively for the last five minutes, replied to this hospitable appeal by a smile and a nod, forbearing even a monosyllable, lest the kind-hearted butcher might feel himself forcibly detained thereby.

Fortunately for him he was out doors, for if the interview had taken place in the parlor, the difficulty of the leave-taking would have been greatly enhanced. The necessity of rising, the carpet beneath his feet, the door-handle, everything would have complicated matters. As it was, the creature munching grass, the earth beneath his feet, the goad in his hand, were so many helps to him, through whose instrumentality he did ultimately begin to go.

"Well, good-by, Miss Fairfax," he said, and then he said, "Well, now we'll expect you." And then he said, "Well, good-by," again. And so, what with some coughing and much laughing, and a good deal of scolding of the cow in a rough, angry voice — quite make believe — he did finally triumph over himself and so departed out of reach and hearing.

"Well, mother, what did Mr. Stake have to say?" inquired Margaret, when Mrs. Fairfax returned to the house. She had been sitting at the window, pale and anxious, wrapt

in a thick wool shawl, though the air was so warm, watching the conversation with intense interest. Of course they were talking of Samuel! What else could they be talking of in such earnest! Perhaps Mr. Lightwait had already seen him, and brought a favorable report—maybe, even a message or a letter! Her heart was beating high with hope when she asked the question, and the hateful little chills that had been running up and down under her gray shawl all the morning, were, for the moment, quite forgotten.

“O, I don’t know hardly what we talked about,” replied the mother; “a good many things.”

She seemed preoccupied and irritable, and Margaret gathered the shawl closer about her bosom, the chills began to creep again. “Really, I thought you would have something to tell, after all this time,” she replied, picking at the fringes of the shawl, and looking down.

“La me! I don’t remember everything he said; nothing of any account; he’s a great bore, and I was tired to death before he went away, and now I suppose I’ve got to go and see his wife.”

“Why, is she sick?” asked Margaret.

“Why? why because he’s asked me, and I’ve said I’d go, and if I don’t he’ll be mad and charge two prices for his beefsteaks, that’s why; but much you know about management.”

And Mrs. Fairfax tied up her shoe strings with angry energy, and tossing her hair down over her shoulders, began brushing it with a will.

“Are you going anywhere, mother?” said Margaret, directly, and still hoping to draw something forth about Samuel.

“I don’t know, I thought maybe I would, but why do you talk so much, child? I thought you was sick.”

“O, mother!” said Margaret: “if you only knew”—and here she broke down, and hid her eyes in her arms, and shook with suppressed emotion.

By degrees, and when she was no further questioned, Mrs. Fairfax relented, and told the news. All about Miss P. Goke and the cooper; all about Mr. Huff, and his boyish hat and boyish capers; all about Mr. Sole, the shoemaker, and the new red screen; and last, not least, all about Mrs. Whiteflock’s fine carriage, with its blue lining and silken curtains.

"Lord bless us, won't she be set up!" was her closing exclamation; "I reckon a body can't touch her with a ten-foot pole, after this!"

And Margaret wiped her eyes and drew near the fire, but shawl and fire would not, both together, make her warm, and the fringes and folds trembled over her bosom, do what she would to keep them still.

"It's the nasty ague!" said Mrs. Fairfax, as she stood with her back to Margaret, pinning her shawl and tying on her bonnet.

It was not the nasty ague, and she knew that very well when she said it; it was the chill that comes of weakness, of pining and of fear. The name of Samuel was not mentioned from day's end to day's end, the mother completely ignoring the relation which in her heart she knew existed between him and her daughter, since the affair of the apparition.

Her own mind was completely taken up with new plans and purposes, and she had no patience with Margaret's fretting and tears. She was spoiling her beauty, and her chance with the bishop's son! Why couldn't she give the poor, homely fellow up, once for all? He wasn't the only man in the world, to be sure!

She addressed Margaret as little Mrs. Bishop, now and then, and talked playfully of what she would do when she was mistress of the parsonage. Mrs. Whiteflock wouldn't be at the head of the heap any longer, she guessed, when the silk skirts of a certain damsel she knew come to be as long and as broad as her own. Sometimes she would speak of the night of the murder, always referring to the time as though a murder had actually been done, and sometimes she would say she could not be thankful enough that everything had turned out as it had — just to think what might have been! Thus intimating that what might have been was over and done with now, forever and forever.

She did not give Margaret the semblance of sympathy — she would not admit that sympathy was required — it was all the nasty ague-fits, brought on by the excitement about the murder. She wished old Sam Dale had stayed where he came from; the poor, good-for-nothing scamp! But, dear sakes! he wasn't worth talking about.

As Margaret drooped, and could not eat nor sleep, she

manifested toward her only the greater hardness and anger. She might rally if she was only a mind; at any rate, she might see the doctor and have some medicine, and that would be all in all. She was perverse, self-willed, and, for her part, she thought she deserved to suffer.

In short, she took the very course best calculated to intensify the girl's love for Samuel, and to set her against the bishop's son. Margaret, therefore, was not really in the confidence of any one; a sort of half-confidence existed between her and her pastor, to be sure, just enough to make her less satisfied and at ease with herself than as though no confidence existed at all. The amount of it was simply this: she had seen and felt that he understood the truth of her position pretty clearly, and she had not denied his conclusions; a tacit understanding and a tacit silence had somehow come to be the relation in which they stood to each other, and still she fluctuated between open confession and down-right denial. He had not sought her confidence, but, on the contrary, rather repelled it, assuming now one shape and now another, as it were, toward her, and since the interview of the garden, so strange and bewildering, she had had no communication with him. Every morning, she had looked for the fulfilment of his promise, and every evening she had despaired. Day by day her step had grown fainter, and her cheek more thin and pale. The general feeling of the neighborhood as she gathered from the spirit that always fills the air in reference to all questionable matters, was, that Samuel had met as good a fate as he deserved, and that the bishop's son was a dreadfully outraged and injured saint. What business had the like of Samuel to lift his hand against the shadow of their bishop's son, even though he were twice crazy. The truth being, perhaps, that nobody really believed him to be crazy. He had probably, under the influence of whiskey, become frightened at one of his own sheared sheep, and so taken to acting the fool generally. He was no credit to society any how, big and clumsy, and poor as a church mouse; the latter being no doubt, the most fatal objection.

Mrs. Whiteflock by her intercession in his favor had considerably lost caste, except it were with a small party of un-influential people. Her oldest and most intimate friend and admirer, Mrs. Fairfax, had quite turned against her amongst the rest, the coolness being the more pronounced in conse-

quence of the new carriage, and last, not least, for the reason that Dr. Dosum had been called to Peter in preference to Dr. Allprice. The latter to be sure secured the case in the end, and that was some comfort, but it by no means obliterated the memory of the first slight. If the truth must be told, she had prepared herself to visit Sister Whiteflock that morning, partly from curious, partly from selfish motives.

She had just finished the knot under her chin and settled the twitching lines about her mouth to a kind of sweetly sad serenity, when the scuffling of footsteps along the walk caused her to turn suddenly from the glass. "What now, I wonder!" she cried. "Nobody never can do anything they want to. I suppose when I get ready to die something will hinder me!" And then all at once putting honey in her tone, added, "My dear boy! do you know how glad I am to see you?"

"Shouldn't wonder!" replied the new comer, who was no other than Luther Whiteflock. He had a roll of printed bills under his arm, a brush stuck in his waistband, and a pot of paste in his hand.

"Did you come to tell me about your father? and what does the doctor think of him?" asked Mrs. Fairfax, without waiting for her first question to be answered.

"Th' ole man, do ye mean?" says Luther, cocking up one eye — "no-sir-ee! I come onto business o' my own! I've gone into government service, don't ye see!" And he swung the paste pot quite against the knees of Mrs. Fairfax.

"My, to be sure," she says, "Important business, is it?"

"You bet! I'm under orders, don't I look like I was?" And he makes another dash of the pot, and then he says, "We're a-going to have the tarnalest big show into Bloomington that ever was showed, and thens the bills of it with picters of the first-class snakes, and royal Bengal beasts, like to look at 'em, Mag?"

Margaret shook her head, but the mother took the offered bill from the boy's hand and examined it with much interest and curiosity, forcing her daughter to see the prints of the elephant, tiger and first-class snake, much against her will, commenting, the while, with hearty satisfaction on the moral and religious characteristics of the show as there set forth. "How nice!" she exclaimed, as her eye ran over the adver-

tisement. "God's people have been long enough shut out from royal elephants and first-class snakes and things!" And then she wondered whether the doctor knew about the show, and whether, if he did, his attention had been called to its elevated and beautiful tone. "Just listen," she said, "this portion might be taken from a Sunday-school tract, for all one would know;" and she read aloud, "Nothing will be permitted during the entire performance that can cause a blush to mantle the virgin cheek of the most virgin modesty; nothing that the pious fathers and mothers of families may not take their numerous offspring to witness with pleasure and profit alike intense and peculiar; nothing that youth upon the dawn of bearded manhood may not behold with benefit to the entire moral and physical nature; nothing that will not alike amuse and instruct the infant at the breast, and the gray-haired sire tottering from this mortal scene."

"Beautifully worded!" cries Mrs. Fairfax, and she reads on, "The marvelous and soul-astounding performance of the carnivorous monkey, Buckeye, supposed by some naturalists to be a man, defies all powers of human description, must be seen to be appreciated, and is alone worth the entire charge of admission. This remarkable creature, bearing upon him the marks of an antediluvian existence, was kept, for his diversion, by Napoleon Bonaparte during his residence on the remote and rocky isle of St. Helena, and has since been in the possession both of kings and high dignitaries of the church. He subsists almost exclusively upon milk, rides two ponies running diverse ways at once, bearing the American flag in his left hand and the eagle in his right. His countenance is habitually expressive of discontent, though he has been known at rare intervals to smile. These exquisitely heightened and instructive performances have three repetitions a day—morning, afternoon and evening, during each of which the grand brass band discourses sweet music to the tune of Old Hundred or Yankee Doodle. Admission twenty-five cents, children half price. Come one, come all." "Dear me! did you ever!" says Mrs. Fairfax; "you must let me have one of these, my little man—I want to show it to a person, if I happen to see a person that I have in my mind. But to change the subject"—and then she asks Luther at what time of day Dr. Allprice makes his professional visit at their house.

Luther tosses a couple of the bills into her lap with the air of a prince giving alms to a beggar, and then he says, "Things at our house are lovely, and the goose hangs high!"

"How so?" says Mrs. Fairfax.

"Mother's turned Mr. Larky adrift," says Luther, "and took th' ole man under her wing, but 'f I'd a-been goink to turn off any one, 'twould a-been the t'other, you bet!"

"Why Luther!" says Mrs. Fairfax, "what a boy you are!" and then she says, "she thinks she knows a person that wouldn't allow his boy to talk that way, if he was married and had a boy!"

"Whew!" whistled Luther, "I'd like to see the feller that wouldn't allow me!"

"But, my dear," says Mrs. Fairfax, putting honey in her tone again, "you didn't tell me what time the doctor makes his visits."

"As often as he darst, then, twice't a day — morning and evening — he's after the chink — that's what he's after!"

Mrs. Fairfax colors, and inquires about the new carriage.

"It's a sort of a one-hoss concern," says Luther, "I don't think much of it" — and then he says he han't rid in it and don't expect to — he's been took up with his own affairs.

"Give my best love to your mother," says Mrs. Fairfax, "and tell her I'll try and drop in this evening." And she deliberately unpins her shawl.

"Well," answered Luther, "when I get this ere paste used up, I'll stop and carry your love into my bucket; reckon there's a heap of it; but I ain't a-goink for to stop my business on account o' no woman's folly, I can tell ye. I ain't green enough for that!"

Margaret turned indignantly upon him. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" she said.

"Was that you?" answered the lad, with all impudence, "or was it a cabbage-head busted?" And then he says with diabolical hatefulness: "Have you heard the good news about Sam, Mag? They say he's stark mad, and got his head shaved! That's the word Lightwait brung out o' town, any how!"

"O, mother!" moans Margaret, piteously.

"O, mother! What can mother do, I'd like to know?" And Mrs. Fairfax folds the show-bill that she wishes "a person" to see, and slips it in her bosom.

"Nothing! Nothing!" Margaret moans again. And the chill takes hold of her with greater force, for she resists no longer, and keeps hold until she is shaken from head to foot.

At last, when she can steady her voice enough to speak, she says: "Did the butcher say anything about it, this morning, mother?"

"About what, child?"

"Why, about Samuel, mother, and about Mr. Lightwait's having been to see him."

And then Mrs. Fairfax says that Mr. Stake didn't say a word about Sam Dale; that, for her part, she didn't ask and didn't want to hear about him; and as for the bishop's son having been to see him, she thinks it's a very unlikely story. And, turning her back to Margaret—it makes her nervous to see her shaking so, she says—she betakes herself to crotcheting and the singing of hymns. And here it may be remarked that the slippers being thus elaborately wrought had been actually commenced for Samuel, afterward transferred to Mr. Lightwait, in her imagination, and made over finally to Doctor Prosper Allprice.

With her trivial nature, it was no great wonder that she had no more patience with Margaret. As the evening drew on, she made two or three ascents to the attic, whether because the small window overlooked Mrs. Whiteflock's gate and hitching-post we will not venture to determine; but certain it is that Doctor Allprice's horse had not been at the post more than five minutes, when she set out on her neighborly visit.

She was so flushed on arriving at the gate, in consequence of her fast walking, that it occurred to her to take a turn round by the barn, and so have a peep at the new carriage, and diminish the hue of her cheeks to a more becoming tint; thus, as she had said to the butcher, "killing two birds with one stone. The fastening of the barn-door proved too high for her arm to reach, conveniently, however. She soon found an opening between the gray weather-boards, of sufficient width to give her a pretty good view, but she had no sooner peered in, than she drew back, the blood in her cheek tingling hotter than before, with wonder and curiosity. Her eyebrows went up of their own accord, and her mouth fell a-gape of its own accord: then she peered again, more cautiously, this time, and then a knot tied itself in her forehead,

and she applied her ear to the crack, and after a minute her hands clutched each other, and her head nodded, as much as to say, "I've got it!" and then, all a-tiptoe, and looking stealthily about her, she went away; but whether the curtains of the carriage were blue or red, she couldn't for the life of her, have told. She lingered in the garden a little while, and as Byron says, calmed herself and fixed her brow into a kind of quiet, and then, with a bunch of flowers in her hand, one of which she already saw, in her mind's eye, in the doctor's button-hole, she sauntered into the house.

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. FAIRFAX VISITS MRS. WHITEFLOCK.



RS. WHITEFLOCK was in the kitchen stirring a bowl of gruel with her own hand. "Peter thinks nobody makes it like me," and of course I humor him."

"Of course," says Mrs. Fairfax; but it was a new tone for Mrs. Whiteflock to take; it had not been her method to humor Peter much heretofore, and Mrs. Fairfax felt that confidence was being withdrawn — felt, in fact, slightly offended. "If she is going to be so stiff," she said to herself, "I don't think I'll trouble myself to tell what I have seen; ten to one I would get no thanks for it, anyhow."

"And how is your good man, Sister Whiteflock?" she said, having come to the foregoing conclusion. "I have only known since morning that he was sick, or you know I would have been here sooner." And then she adds that she heard it at last quite by accident.

In their last unwisely confidential interview, they had addressed each other as Martha and Margaret; but, somehow, these familiarities and all like ones, were dropped now, and that confidential interview was as though it had never been.

"By accident, sister?" asks Mrs. Whiteflock, holding her spoon suspended above her bowl. "Why, I sent my son, Luty, a-purpose! Didn't he tell you?"

"Sent who?" asked Mrs. Fairfax, looking puzzled and surprised.

Now she understood perfectly well who Luty was; in fact the changing of the name from Luther Larky to Luty, (for Mrs. Whiteflock had always before called the name in full) was a complete revelation to her; there had been a falling out with Luther, senior, and hence the new appellation of the namesake.

If she had expected to disconcert her neighbor by this question and the accompanying look of astonishment, she failed.

"My little son, to be sure," answers Mrs. Whiteflock; and then she says she supposes he forgot it, and she resumes the stirring of her gruel, quietly.

"Forgot it! that would be strange!" says Mrs. Fairfax, "and his own father so sick!"

"Well, my husband is not so sick," says Mrs. Whiteflock; "he is a little ailing, and has lost his appetite; that is about all." And then she goes on to say that Luty is very much taken up about the show that is coming; that he has some of the bills to put up, and that accounts for his forgetfulness. However, she must take him in hand, she says; or, she adds, "have his father do so."

"It would certainly be wise!" says Mrs. Fairfax, hardly suppressing a sneer.

There is a little silence, during which Mrs. Whiteflock beats the gruel with energy quite disproportioned to the work, and then she says with a melancholy intonation: "How is poor Margaret?"

Mrs. Fairfax answers, putting great cheerfulness in her voice, that Margaret is quite well, except for a little touch of the nasty ague that is going about.

"Ah, is that all?" replies Mrs. Whiteflock; "I am so glad to know it." And then she says, connecting their names quite by chance as it would appear: "Have you been to see Samuel within a day or two?"

"Within a day or two?" cries Mrs. Fairfax. "I haven't been at all, and what's more, I don't intend to go!"

"Humph!" is that the way you desert your friends in

their trouble, sister?" And Mrs. Whiteflock holds the spoon suspended again.

"Friends!" retorts Mrs. Fairfax. "Sam Dale my friend, indeed! Really, Sister Whiteflock, you do me too much honor."

"I don't do you any dishonor, I hope," says Mrs. Whiteflock. "I've lived in the house with Samuel, and ought to know something about him." And then she says that if what her husband has foreseen comes out true, Samuel will have a most respectable position in the neighborhood yet.

"Bless my heart, I hope you are not going crazy too!" says Mrs. Fairfax.

"On the contrary, I think I am just coming to my senses," says Mrs. Whiteflock. "And as regards Samuel, I never saw a nicer man about a house in my life, and I've lived with a good many."

"Ay, to be sure; there is Mr. Larky, for instance; how long has he been with you, my dear?"

Mrs. Fairfax meant this to be a deadly thrust, but Mrs. Whiteflock marred her point, by answering with calm directness: "Why almost ever since we were married—long before Matty was born, he came to us, and she is now in her fifteenth year; almost a woman, she thinks herself." And then she runs on about how fast girls grow up, and how soon they begin to want their own heads about things; and how they will lace their corsets, and persist in wearing tight shoes, and twisting, and torturing, and burning the hair all off their heads; but when she has concluded the long list of faults, she says that she has no reason to complain, she supposes that her girls are no worse than others, but if they had a little more of their father's quiet disposition she would be glad.

Mrs. Fairfax felt herself more and more offended by these repeated references to the husband and father; had not Mrs. Whiteflock always said Peter till now, and why this new tone!

"I could tell her something about one of her girls," she says inwardly, "if I had a mind; but just let her find out things for herself, if she is so stiff. I don't know as it's my business."

This was what she thought to herself, but she said aloud: "Where is your daughter, Mattie, to-day? I should like to

see her." And then she says quite innocently : " I shouldn't wonder if Mr. Larky was taking a notion to her one of these days."

" What put that moonshine into your head, my dear ? " says Mrs. Whiteflock, and she laughed with a heartiness that indicated a long distance from any suspicion of that sort, on her part.

" O, I don't know," says Mrs. Fairfax, " what put it into my head ; things come about that a body don't look for, sometimes." And then she says, " But you didn't tell me whether she was at home ! "

" To be sure ; she has gone out to the field with her father, to pay a visit to poor old Posey ; I expect them back every moment." And then she talks a good deal about the strong attachment her husband has for old Posey, and says she often tells him in jest that she doesn't suppose he would survive long if anything should befall the old mare ! None of this talk comes down to the truth of things ; it is surface, and make-believe, from first to last.

Mrs. Fairfax had no real honesty in her nature to come down to ; not that she was not sometimes honest, but if so, it was with premeditation, and for a purpose ; and Mrs. Whiteflock could not yet make up her mind to say outright ; " I have been wrong all these years, my sister, and I have now taken Peter to my heart, and mean, with Heaven's help, to do my duty hereafter. I am sorry for the past, and ashamed of it. The treacherous weakness for Luther Larky is overcome at last, and he is to go away from us for good and all." She could not say this, because it is hard to be purely honest when honesty involves a humiliating confession, and she had not yet suffered to the simple truth.

" I had no idea your husband was able to be about," says Mrs. Fairfax. " I am so glad to know it, my dear ; of course, I expected to find him in the cellar."

And then she says, " By the way, darling, don't you think that damp place has had something to do with his sickness ? "

Mrs. Whiteflock did color a little at this, and answered truly that she was afraid so, and that she meant to have his bed up-stairs in a day or two.

" I would take the doctor's advice upon it," says Mrs. Fairfax. And then she says, as though it had just occurred to her, that she thought she noticed the doctor's horse as she came in, and asks if he is waiting.

No," Mrs. Whiteflock says; "he had another call to make, and not finding my husband in, went away almost immediately, proposing to stop here on his return."

And then Mrs. Fairfax unpins her shawl, and says she wants to have a little talk with him about Margaret and the nasty chills, and besides, she can't think of going away without having seen the man of the house.

Mrs. Whiteflock gives some direction to the "help" about using the china and the silver knives and forks, and then conducts her visitor to the spare bed-room to lay off her things.

"You've got your house like a palace, a'most," says Mrs. Fairfax, looking with admiring eyes from the flowered paper on the wall to the flowered carpet on the floor. "You must be very happy."

"O I am," Mrs. Whiteflock replied, and then she added, "as happy as I deserve to be;" and she gave a little sigh and turned away.

"I've a'most a mind to tell her," mused Mrs. Fairfax, "I don't believe she is so much happier than the rest of us, for all," and having almost resolved, she put her finger on her lip, and went silently down stairs.

Directly Peter came in, looking pale, and for him, thin. He was followed by little Peter, who shied away from him and looked at him askance, seeming all the while desirous of being near him.

"And so you're father's boy, ain't you?" says Mrs. Fairfax, patting him on the head. Little Peter hesitated, and answered with some confusion, after a while, that he was going to be uncle Sam's boy.

"And who is uncle Sam?"

"Uncle Samuel Dale," says the boy; "don't you know him?"

"I do, to my sorrow!" says Mrs. Fairfax, and she glances at Peter as much as to say, "what does this mean?"

But instead of replying to her, he nodded to the child and told him to go out of doors and play and have some fun.

"Don't want to," says the urchin.

"O yes you do! You want to find a hen's nest, don't you? And if you look sharp in the roost and in the haymow, and all round, maybe you'll find one with twenty eggs in it. O wouldn't that be nice? Then you could bring 'em in to

mother, you see, and ask her to bake a little cake for your supper. Peter loves sweet cakes, don't he?"

But though Peter loved sweet cakes, he loved to see visitors no less, as it seemed, and hung his head and lingered, divided against himself.

"A terrible misfortune, Sam has had, to say no more," Mrs. Fairfax began directly.

Peter's face flushed up, and he nudged his elbow toward his boy, and then he coughed, and then he shook his head, and finally put his whole hand across his mouth and pressed his lips quite flat.

"Ah, a great misfortune, to be sure!" Mrs. Fairfax went on, but Peter winced and winked and pulled at her sleeve, and in the end got her stopped.

"Yes, yes, a great fortune Sam has had," he answered; "he'll be one o' the richest men in these parts afore long." And then he opened his mouth to an O, and looked wise.

"Good fortune do you call it to be sent to prison? and I am sure it amounts to the same thing. I don't understand."

"You're forgettin' about that hen's nest," says Peter, patting his boy on the shoulder; "run right along, or else your mother won't have time to bake the sweet cake;" but still the lad hung back. The father looked worried, and told him in a low voice aside, that it wasn't his uncle Sam they was a-talkin' about, but another Sam that lived some'rs away off, and that he never heard of, and then he patted him again, and said "father would like to have a sweet cake too."

"Where is the nest then?" whined the lad.

"Where at? Why, in the roost, I reckon."

"No, 'tain't; 'cause I was there to-day."

"Well, go and look again; come now, that's a good boy."

"It'll just be lookin' for a nest where there is no nest," pouted the boy.

"What, don't old Speckle lay into the roost; in that corner where the straw is? Run and see; it won't take more'n half a minute."

"No, sir; Speckle has stole her nest."

"O, it's Yaller Legs; I made a mistake."

"No, Sir, 'tain't her, 'cause she lays under Posey's corn-trough."

"Well, look there then."

"But I did look there just half an hour ago."

"S'pose you should look under the edge o' the barn," still patting.

"Mother said I mustn't do that no more."

"O, did she? Anyhow, there's the hay-mow; and sweet-cakes full of eggs is awful good, when they're hot and smokin'."

This appeal was too much for boy-nature to withstand, and casting longing, lingering looks behind, the child at last got himself out of the room.

"I declare," says Peter, "I never patted that boy's cheek afore without his running straight to do my will; but there is times when all boys is incompatible. He was so took up with you," he says, apologetically, and then he says little folks has big ears sometimes, and for a reason which it will all be understood in due time, he doesn't want his boy to hear a word agin Samuel Dale.

"But you must know he's a dangerous man!" cries Mrs. Fairfax.

"'Cause why? 'cause he seen a sperit?"

"O, Peter, how foolish you are about them things," says Mrs. Fairfax; "the day of ghosts and witches and all that is gone by."

"Who told you so?" says Peter, and then he says as to witches, he don't believe into 'em nuther.

"O, man alive! there's the witch of Endor, you know."

"No, I don't know no such thing."

"Why, Peter, I did hope you read your Bible, at least."

"At least! there was no use o' your puttin' that on, as I see," says Peter; and then he says, "I read my Bible regular, but I never read about the witch, which you speak of her."

"Have you the Good Book convenient?" says Mrs. Fairfax; triumphantly opening, when it was handed her, the book of Samuel, and turning to the twenty-eighth chapter.

"Read out," says Peter, "beginning at the sixth verse."

"And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets."

And Mrs. Fairfax paused and cast a look at Peter still more triumphant than the first; but, to her surprise, his face was lit up with a gleam of satisfaction.

"You perceive," says he, "the Lord had various ways of

answering them that called on him, just as he has now-a-days."

Mrs. Fairfax went on : —

"Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor."

"There!" cries Mrs. Fairfax, "what do you say to that?"

"I say," says Peter, the gleam of satisfaction still shining in his face, "that she wasn't thought to be a witch, either by Saul, or his servants; that comes of your modern skepticism."

"Modern skepticism?" cries Mrs. Fairfax, lifting up her eyes with horror and amazement.

"Yes'm," says Peter; "disbelief in Scrip^tter, which it is nothing but skepticism."

"It doesn't make no difference what they called her," says Mrs. Fairfax; "she was a witch anyhow, as you shall admit;" and she read on: "And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, ('Just as some does now!' interposes Peter. Mrs. Fairfax frowned, and continued,) and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night. ('Just as they do yet!' says Peter.) And they came to the woman by night, and he said, I pray thee divine unto me by the familiar spirit ('You notice he didn't say by witch-work!' says Peter) and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee.

"And the woman said unto him, Behold thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits ('It seems there was a good many of 'em,' says Peter) and, the wizards out of the land; wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life to cause me to die?"

"And Saul sware to her by the Lord ('Would he a-swore to a witch?' says Peter,) saying, as the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.

"And then said the woman, ('Mind, not the witch!') whom shall I bring up unto thee? and he said, Bring me up Samuel.

"And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice; and the woman spake to Saul, saying, "Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul."

"You see she was frightened at her own doings," says Mrs. Fairfax, "and that proves that she was bad."

"No, mem, I don't see it," says Peter; "she wasn't frightened at her own doings, or rather at the power of her familiar spirit; she was afraid because she found the man to be Saul; which you perceive she didn't know of herself."

Mrs. Fairfax glanced along the chapter and presently said: "Saul didn't see Samuel with his own eyes, it appears, so we have only the witch's word that he was seen at all."

"Witch agin!" says Peter, impatiently; "can't you speak respectful as Saul did and call her a woman with a familiar spirit?"

Mrs. Fairfax made no answer, but read aloud: "And he said unto her, What form is he of? and she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground and bowed himself."

"There!" she exclaimed, "what do you say now?"

"Well, mem," says Peter, "I say that things in them days was just like things is now, purty much; some sees, and some doesn't, and some has sperits about 'em, and some doesn't, agin, and what's more, they don't even believe in 'em; and them's the kind that I call 'em the biggest skeptics of all."

"And you mean to say that I am one?"

"No, I don't say that; but I do say them that don't believe into the Scripters as the Scripters is writ, them is 'em, wheresomever found."

"Your discussion is very interesting, I dare say," says Mrs. Whiteflock, coming in, with a smile; "but I am obliged to put an end to it. Supper is ready; come, Mrs. Fairfax; come, Peter, dear."

Peter glanced at Mrs. Fairfax, all his face shining with delight, as though he would say, "You observe how that great woman condescends to address me."

The elegant abundance of the table, the fine linen, the silver, made Mrs. Fairfax jealous, and added to the irritation she had already experienced. Nevertheless, she praised everything, smiling with secret satisfaction at the thought of an unhappy matter she might set against it all, if she chose.

Peter sat as a stranger at his own table, notwithstanding the adroit efforts of his wife to bring him out, and make him feel at home, and appear to advantage. But between his

pride at thus being flattered, and his bashful confusion and awkwardness in being jerked so suddenly out of the old rut, he was really in a plight more pitiable than common. His own old Posey would have been much more self-possessed, and almost as much in place at the head of his table, as he.

"I had hoped to have the pleasure of the doctor's company to tea," says the hostess; and then she says, "I did wait for him some time, but perhaps I should have waited longer; would you have liked me to, my dear?"

Peter laughed, partly with delight, partly with shame-facedness — answering finally that whatever her wish was, it was a wish which it was his. And in the effort of speaking he dropped his fork, and in his vain attempt to recover it, upset his teacup, to the great temporary damage of the exquisite table-cloth.

"O, mercy! mercy! What have I done?" he cries, standing up, and lifting his hands, in childish terror.

"A trifle, not worth minding, my dear," says Mrs. Whiteflock, quietly indicating the vacant chair, and endeavoring to make him seat himself, without telling him to do so outright. Then she calls for a napkin, and rises to spread it under his plate herself, and by dint of cunning management gets him back into his place.

"He is so nervous, poor dear, since this last ill turn," she says, apologetically, to Mrs. Fairfax, who answers that she never saw him looking better, and finds it very hard to believe that he is sick. And then she says she knows he is sick beyond all question, or Dr. Allprice would not be making regular visits. He doesn't go like some, 'need or no need!'"

Mrs. Whiteflock looked up, brightening. She had guessed the secret. "I am so sorry he doesn't come," she says, "for I don't know a more agreeable gentleman." And then she says he is a great acquisition to the church as well as to the profession.

"And we need him just now to make up for what we have lost," observes Mrs. Fairfax.

"Lost! Who have we lost?" Mrs. Whiteflock inquires with an anxious face.

"Why, Sam Dale, of course, and if he is not lost for eternity as well as for time, he may bless his stars, I should think."

Peter's hand grew steady at this, and his maudlin expression changed to one of grave intelligence.

"I don't like to hear things like them said agin nobody," says he; "if the Lord has damnation to deal out, I reckon he can deal it in his own time and way without any of our help; anyhow, I never felt called on to take his work out of his hands."

"Dear me, nor I neither, but all the threats against the wicked must apply to somebody, and the Lord's too good not to carry them out!"

"But taint for us to carry 'em out; and though hand jine in hand, the wicked will not go unpunished, even if we fallible creturs hold our peace."

Mrs. Fairfax colored deeply, and refused a second cup of tea.

"But I must insist," cries Mrs. Whiteflock, reaching forth her pretty white hand, and smiling her sweetest. And then she says to Peter, "Don't you know, my dear, that it is very naughty to dispute with a lady in your own house?" And then to Mrs. Fairfax, "You must know, my friend, that Samuel Dale is a great favorite with my husband and me."

"Indeed! I didn't know you had so many favorites."

It was Mrs. Whiteflock's turn to color now, and she did — scarlet, and seeing her advantage, Mrs. Fairfax relented and took a second cup of tea.

Peter had relapsed into himself again and was looking with silly wonder and admiration at the silver knives and forks.

The anxious wife felt bound to arrest him, and at the same time to make him shine out a little if possible. She at first, therefore, called her visitor's attention to the fact that he had seemed to have an accession of gifts lately, and then she says, addressing him, "What was it you thought the spirits said to you the other night. I can't tell it as you did."

But Peter answers that he doesn't remember.

"O yes you do — two or three nights ago. Something about the pearly gates and the seventh sphere; it was poetry. Can't you repeat it?"

But Peter says them fine things is things which they slip away.

"It was about a pale flower being transplanted from earth,

to bloom forever in the garden of heaven," says the wife, still urging him on.

"I catch the ends o' lines now," says Peter, "which they was the poetry of 'em, and one was pale, and one was veil, and one o' the tothers was heaven, and I can't tell about the last, whether it was given or riven."

"I'm very sorry you don't remember the whole of it," says Mrs. Whiteflock; "it was very beautiful." And then bending to Mrs. Fairfax, and whispering, she says he seems to have lost his memory a good deal with this last illness; but Mrs. Fairfax only lifts her eyebrows and slightly inclines her head. Then Mrs. Whiteflock continued: "The doctor is quite alarmed about it."

That was another matter, and Mrs. Fairfax grew serious and interested at once. Between the unmanageable husband and the disaffected visitor, poor Mrs. Whiteflock had uphill work of it, and all the shining service didn't take much from the discomfort. It was not so easy to make a man and a gentleman of Peter all at once; and so far as I have observed, it is never an easy task to recast a human soul after it has been cooling among the shoals and shadows of time for the space of forty or fifty years. I have seen women who flattered themselves that there was some marvellous and transmuting power in marriage that must needs make the husband quite to their minds, when the man was not; and I have wished all such women joy of their faith, but for my part I have had slight confidence in it.

Mrs. Whiteflock, as before said, had uphill work of it, and all the more because she tried so hard to make her good man do and say those things which it was not in him to do and say.

Matters waxed worse and worse, until it seemed that the worst point of all must have been touched; but say no man is happy till he is dead, and no woman neither. Martha's place at the table had been all this time vacant, to the manifest uneasiness and annoyance of the mother, though she tried to put a good face on the matter. She had not been with her father to look after old Posey, and none of the children, neither Madeline, nor Mary, nor Lucinda, nor John, nor Peter, nor Cartright, nor any of them, had seen her for the last two hours.

"In her chamber, fixing up some finery, dare say, against

the show," said the mother ; at this, Madeline ran and soon fetched back word that she was not there.

"Never mind," the mother says ; "she is probably in the basement — her father's office — she is very fond of the sunset window there," — thus endeavoring both to account for the girl's absence, and at the same time make it appear that the basement was rather an attractive place. "Never mind, child !" and she caught Madeline by the sleeve, but nothing would do but she must go down."

"No, mother, she isn't in the cellar !"

"Say basement; or office, child, do !" in a half whispered tone of reproof.

"What for? 'Cause Mrs. Fairfax is here?"

"Why, no! how ridiculous to be sure!" And the mother, with her cheek on fire, hushed the child up, and began talking in a spirited tone about the doctor. "What in the world could detain him? Can it be Mrs. Jones or Mrs. Smith? They are both expecting, you know;" — confidentially and with great accession of interest — "but may be they would prefer the old doctor;" and then seeing that Mrs. Fairfax tossed up her head, she added, as though it had been a part of her first intention, "but that's not likely, neither."

"Say, mother, what is Mrs. Jones expecting?" cries Madeline, making vague dabs in the air with her fork, as indicative, no doubt, of the confused state of her mind.

"Expecting Abner and Josey to catch the hooping-cough; but little girls must eat their suppers and not ask questions."

"How are little girls to learn, then? say, mother?"

"O, you behave so naughty, Mrs. Fairfax will never come to see us again, will you, Mrs. Fairfax?"

"No, never!" says Mrs. Fairfax, shaking her head at little Madeline with make-believe displeasure. For, what with the doctor, and the mysterious matter obliquely glanced at, she was gotten into quite a good humor, the consummation being almost perfected when Mrs. Whiteflock observed that Dr. Allprice was beautifully behaved in cases of hooping-cough; she must say that for him, if he was a young man.

"Not so very young," says Mrs. Fairfax eagerly; "he is older than I, by a good deal."

He was the older by just three days; but it did not suit Mrs. Fairfax to be too accurate, just then.

The current was thus beginning to run smoothly, at last, when all at once little Peter came flying in — his face flushed, and holding his cap out before him in an excited manner.

"How many eggs, my little man?" says the father, peeping curiously into the cap.

"Nary," replies the lad; "but I got something else, though! Just see, father; ain't it enough to take me and you and Uncle Samuel and mother and all of us to the great show what's a-coming? Cipher it up and see; won't it be fun though! But do you think Uncle Samuel will go?"

"O, be sure," says the father, taking up the loose change that was in the cap and counting it; "that is, if he gets home from the frolic he's gone to, in time; but where did you find all this money? for money is a thing which doesn't grow onto bushes."

The boy hung his head and made no answer.

"What! cries the mother, coming to the rescue. "You haven't been to your father's money drawer, I hope?"

"No, ma'am," says Peter, promptly; and then he says he didn't know that father had a money drawer; he thought the money was hers.

"No matter what you thought! What you have to do just now is to tell your father and me where you got these silver pieces." And she took hold of the boy's shoulder much as a policeman takes hold of a culprit to whom he has traced the missing jewels or the great bank robbery.

"I got 'em in the barn," whimpered the lad, frightened half out of his wits.

"In the barn? that's a likely story! do you mean to pretend you found them?"

"No, ma'am, I don't mean to pretend nothing, but I don't want to tell nothing more about it."

"Why don't you want to tell?"

"Because I wasn't to; I was to say I got 'em honest, and I wasn't to say no more; I'd rather give 'em back than tell."

"Give them back to whom?"

"To them that give 'em."

"And who are them? that's the question."

"But the answer is the answer that I ain't to answer," says little Peter, trembling.

"But you must answer, or take a whipping."

"Well, he'll whip me if I tell, and you'll whip me if I don't tell."

"He! who is he?"

Peter threw the money from him and began to cry.

"This is most extraordinary;" cries the exasperated mother; and then she asks Mrs. Fairfax if she ever had such trouble with her children, adding that she knew she never had, nor no other woman!

There is no diplomatist like a woman when she chooses to be one, and Mrs. Fairfax, who understands the whole matter, manipulates it so artfully that the boy escapes punishment and the mother is content to leave the secret to the development of time. Content, I said, but it was with that poor content which we purchase by the postponement of an inevitable evil. She seemed content, and the arrival of Dr. Allprice directly, prevented all further discussion of the mystery, for the present.

"Dear Prosper," cries Mrs. Fairfax, who could not forego the high privilege of engagement, "I was getting so uneasy about you!" And she made room for him by her side; but the doctor seemed oblivious to her invitation, and seated himself by Mrs. Whiteflock.

"I shall be greatly flattered," he said, bowing all round, as though there had been a general uneasiness felt on his account.

"I was afraid your horse had run away, or something; indeed I was." And Mrs. Fairfax put her handkerchief to her eyes..

"Does your head ache, my dear madam?" And the doctor orders a blue pill now and then.

"It is not my head, Prosper," replies the widow, in a voice low and sad; "it's my heart."

"Ah, indeed! then I am afraid your case will baffle medical skill." And the doctor laughs a thin little laugh by way of covering his confusion.

The widow drops the handkerchief from her eyes, and placing one hand on his arm with that right of manner an engagement is presumed to confer, says, with bewitching sweetness, "Promise me now, won't you, my dear, that you will never drive that dreadfully wild horse of yours again? O, if you knew how anxious it makes me!"

"Your anxiety is quite superfluous, madam, and I regret

that you should waste it; my mare is perfectly manageable; a little spirited, that is all."

"But do promise me, do now, you must!"

"I should be most happy to oblige you, madam," replies the doctor, coloring, and spreading butter on his pound cake, in his confusion, "but really, I prefer to be excused."

"Naughty man!" cries Mrs. Fairfax, shaking her head playfully, and then she tells him that she cannot allow him to eat butter with his cake — that it will bring on dyspepsia as true — as true as that he is very dear to somebody she knows of!

"But the blue pill is infallible," says the doctor, buttering his cake again, this time in defiance.

"O Prosper, you shall mind me!" and Mrs. Fairfax playfully snatches the buttered piece from his hand.

The doctor took no notice of this charming sally, but turning to Mrs. Whiteflock made some inquiry about her children, the while he disposed of his napkin, and she, feeling that some sort of oppression one feels before the bursting of a thunder-storm, presently arose. Mrs. Fairfax came dancing up to the doctor, and asked him, with what she thought a very childish prettiness, if they should not kiss and be friends! He answered, dryly, that though he did not object to kisses in themselves, he had a decided prejudice against taking them with bread and butter, and he offered his arm to Mrs. Whiteflock. Mrs. Fairfax took the arm of Peter, who by this time was sidling down stairs toward his own familiar quarters, where he felt so much more at home.

"No, sir, that'll never do!" she says, shaking her head at him playfully, "it's so seldom we have the pleasure of your society that we can't give it up readily. Really, it is quite an unexpected favor." And so, he walking automatically, she got him into the drawing-room. Then she makes him sit by her on the sofa, taking secret delight in the embarrassment of her dear sister, as she leads the conversation to channels quite strange and puzzling to him, using words of which she is sure he does not know the meaning — words which she is not accustomed to use herself, and which she lugs in, right or wrong. And in this she had a twofold purpose, doubtless; to shine with uncommon splendor in the doctor's eyes, as well as to annoy her dear friend.

"If Martha Whiteflock is a mind to pretend to me," she says to herself, "I'll take her at her word, that's all!"

But her brilliancy failed in one of its objects; it did not enchant the doctor; on the contrary, it brought him to the very borders of disenchantment, and at length, excusing himself abruptly to his hostess, he crossed the room and with "Allow me, madam?" seated himself between his mistress and poor Peter.

CHAPTER XIV.

SAMUEL AMONG LUNATICS.



UST for a minute?" says Mrs. Whiteflock, and, being moved by an instinctive admonition, she went out of the room.

"*Madam!* and to *me?*" cries Mrs. Fairfax, with angry reproachfulness of tone and manner.

"Pardon me," says the doctor, but *that* would not be quite proper here—you understand?"

But the unfortunate widow understood nothing of the sort indicated by the doctor's evasive *that*. Indeed she was one of those affectionally demonstrative women who habitually say to the man they have to hold and to keep: "My sweetest, will you help me to gravy? Love, a potato?" and "Darling, some beefsteak—fat if you please, darling?" and do not see that they thereby outrage the eternal fitness of things.

Mrs. Fairfax, therefore, cast still more reproachful looks upon her man, who, having by this time felt the pulse and examined the tongue of the patient, was engaged in spreading a blister of Spanish flies, as big as the full moon.

"There is a time for all things, Margaret," he says, glancing toward the door to make sure that Mrs. Whiteflock was not approaching; "a time for blisters, and a time for—*that!*"

"Suppose there is," says the widow, beating the carpet with her foot, "I don't see that it is any reason why a person who is engaged to a person should behave to a person as though they had never seen a person before!"

"There is such a thing as propriety," says the doctor, still intent upon his blister.

"Yes, but I disagree with you as to what propriety is."

"So I perceive, and am sorry for it." And the doctor concentrates his entire attention upon his patient, with all the indifference of a real husband.

"Appetite good?"

Peter shakes his head.

"A blue pill before each meal — that will fetch you up."

"How about sleep? Sound and refreshing?"

"No, sir; just t'other ways; onsound and onrefreshing."

"Half a wine-glass of brandy, and blue pill, on retiring."

"Chest and lungs free from pain?"

"No, doctor; pain is free with them."

"Ah, indeed! but on the whole, rather a favorable symptom. Pain is not a disease, my good sir, but an effect; a warning, as it were, that we must be up and doing. We must remove the disease with our blue pills, and we shall hear no more of the pain. Why, sir, I have cured curvature of the spine, and even softening of the brain with one box of these wonderful restoratives!"

"Will they cure curvature of the mind?" says Peter; "'cause that is what has got hold o' me! A disease which I've had it ever since afore I was born, I may say."

"Ah to be sure!" says the doctor sympathetically; and then he says they will cure any form of disease to which poor humanity is subject — mild or malignant, acute or chronic. Thousands of cases have been cured, simply by the use of the blue pill, that have defied the powers of the aurist and the oculist. Ear-ache, noises in the head, intolerance of light, sore eyes, weak eyes, dimness or distorted vision, strabismus, opacity of the cornea, falling of the eyelid, double sight, cancer, worms, vertigo or dizziness, gout, nervousness, consumption, rheumatism, paralysis, and, in short, every form of disease known to the profession.

Some doctors have their specialty, and their special remedies, but the great remedial agent is mercury, to be employed, of course, by the skilful physician with reference to the age,

sex, temperament and habits of the patient. The whole range of the *materia medica* ought, in my judgment, to be reduced to this sole agent, its modes of administration and action upon the animal economy. Of course I did not propose to eschew cupping, venesection and blistering by means of the fly or *cantharis*." Instead of shining down the doctor, Mrs. Fairfax felt that she was herself shone down, the way he ran over a list of diseases alone was to her mind quite overwhelming.

"I will bring him to feel my power one way or another," she says to herself, and she crosses the room with a high head, and joining Mrs. Whiteflock, who has just entered, opens a conversation upon well-buckets.

"Is yours, or rather, I should say, Mr. Whiteflock's, iron-bound," she says, "and was it made by our old friend, Mr. Hoops?" And then she tells about her own, and how it began to give out some along last fall, and how she got it mended with a new hoop or so, and how it gave out again, along towards Christmas, and how she *docktored* it up herself with a bit of twine and a nail; "for you know, Sister Whiteflock," she says, with an emphasis of great satisfaction "that we can sometimes manage little ailments at home and amongst ourselves better than any of the doctors!"

And then she tells how the bucket gave out for good, and all along toward spring, in March she thinks it was, the fore part of March, and how she made it serve on one way and another, with corks and strings and nails, for to say the truth, she was loth to part with the old bucket; her *first* husband got it for her, and then she blushes and omits the first, and goes on; her husband got it for her in his day — poor dear man — Mrs. Whiteflock remembers him, and how tall and straight and handsome he was; this being especially meant to nettle the doctor who was short and uncommonly thick. But at last she says, "it happened one evening when Mr. Hoops was at our house, that we went together to the well for a glass of water," and then she laughs and says "of course we went for a glass of water, what else should we go for? And while we were standing there in the moonlight leaning against the curb and talking of who was courting and who had been married lately, and so on, for you know, my dear, how he does run on upon such subjects, I said, as he began to be too personal, 'By the way, Mr. Hoops, what will it

cost me to get a new well-bucket made?' And I called his attention the more effectually to call it off from other things, to the rickety old one.

"And he says, says he, 'that'll depend on who you give the job to. Some,' says he, 'would charge you five dollars.'

"And then I says, says I, 'I shan't employ those kind,' says I, 'not if I can do better.'

"And, says he, 'you can do a good deal better, if you don't scorn my work too much.'

"And, says I, I says, 'I don't scorn your work at all; on the contrary, I think your work is superb, judging from my churn-dasher, which is all the work you have ever done for me.'

"And, says he, he says, 'whose fault has it been that your work has gone to the t'other shops? Not mine, I'm sure.'

"And then I says, says I, 'it hasn't been mine, neither. Mr. Hoops,' says I, 'for I've only had a new ear put into the milk-pail, and that one new churn-dasher, since my poor husband's time; and you had one o' them jobs,' says I, 'and it was a mistake about your not having the other one too.'

"But I saw he felt hurt, for all; he's a man of tender feelings, you know; and to make my story short, I just gave him the job at once, and I suppose he means to lay himself out to make me a splendid bucket; for if he's been to see me once about it, he's been ten times, I reckon.'

"Perhaps he only makes the bucket an excuse for the visits!" says Mrs. Whiteflock.

"O no, I think not; he wouldn't have me!" answers Mrs. Fairfax. And then she laughs and tosses her head in a way that she means to be contradictory of her words.

And directly she says if she was going to marry at all, she would have him as soon as any one; for he is such a nice-spoken man, and so considerate of a woman's feelings! but really she has no idea of marrying again; how can she, when her heart is in the grave.

"Mrs. Whiteflock, says the doctor, for he could not keep his place by Peter any longer, "I desire to leave some special directions about your husband's treatment with yourself; he is apt to be forgetful and negligent, I imagine, not that the case is critical, by any means; it will yield to treatment, I have no doubt; but you know the wise saying—an ounce of

prevention, &c., and the preventive, patient. The who
 The laws of hygiene are based solely judgment, to
 mercury. What sunshine is to the natural administration an
 is to the human economy!" I did not pro-

Then he gave the strictest orders about by means
 "Dietetics, madam," he said, "have their place the doctor,
 laws of hygiene, but by no means a prominent of the way
 ever, any derangement of the natural functions, quite
 especially any derangement that causes emaciation
 demands the most vigorous abstinence from all meat,
 other nourishing kinds of food. The cellular tissue, magh
 which is that aggregation of countless minute cells or ve
 cles, that in plants composes their texture or substance, a
 in the human system forms the tissue which unites th
 organs and envelops every part of the body, and which in
 its diminutive cells holds or contains a fluid, intended and
 calculated to facilitate and promote the action or motion of
 the separate parts on each other, must have time, you per
 ceive, to recuperate itself without being called on to assist,
 indirectly, as it does, in the performance, labor, or work of
 digestion. Hence, madam, you perceive, observe or under
 stand the absolute necessity of keeping down the dietetics
 of your husband to the lowest possible grade. If he have a
 longing for food it is quite fictitious, remember, and not to
 be in the least regarded. I would recommend water-gruel,
 buttermilk, whey, and if at any time he should be very im
 portunate, for sick persons have unaccountable whims, a
 spoonful or two of chicken-broth, very weak, or a thin bit
 of burnt toast dipt in vinegar. If an acceleration of the
 pulse denoting fever be observed, which is always character
 ized by languor and thirst, tea of camomile or other bitter
 herbs may be administered, but cold water must be rigidly
 prohibited; not one drop of that, madam, for your life!
 Sleep is of no consequence; the less of it, and the less
 sound, the better, but the fresh air is to be guarded against;
 the patient's chamber must be carefully closed, day and night,
 and I would recommend a discontinuance of those daily
 walks; they exhaust the nervous energies with almost fatal
 rapidity. I would recommend, too, that the patient abstain
 from all employment; let his attention be concentrated as
 much upon himself and his disease as possible, exclude all
 sunshine and cheerful conversation from his apartment, and

cost me to get a new ^{with} unvarying punctuality to the administering of attention the more ^{of} dial agencies.

to the rickety old ^{may}, I think, for the present, content ourselves with application of a blister to the region of the stomach, with mustard plasters to the soles of the feet; and with prosecutions of these few orders, I see no reason to ^{say} I, ^{no} but a speedy and permanent recovery."

And with a promise to visit his patient at an early hour the following day, Dr. Allprice bowed himself and backed himself out, for he was a man exceedingly fond of ceremony, in his own little way. Mrs. Fairfax found it hard to conceal her bitter humiliation and disappointment; but she caught at whatever she might, as a sinking person will, and with various pitiable flounderings kept herself from going quite under the turbulent wave.

She had confidently expected the doctor to see her home, but instead of that he had left her without any intimation that he would ever see her. She wished the well-bucket at the bottom of the sea, and that she had never heard of Mr. Hoops; she wished she had remained at home with her sick child, though not for the sick girl's sake, it is to be feared. She was angry with the doctor; hated him with that sort of hatred that borders on the confines of love. She was angry with herself, but most and chiefly was she vexed with her innocent friend and neighbor, Mrs. Whiteflock! But why she could not have told.

"By the way, sister," she says, as she tied her bonnet strings, "your daughter, Martha, hasn't come in yet, has she?"

"I am by no means sure she was out," replies Mrs. Whiteflock, affecting a quiet unconcern she by no means feels. "Come again, my dear, very, very soon."

"O, certainly; there is no one I am so fond of visiting; take the best care of Peter—I beg pardon—of your good husband, I should have said," and with a kiss and a long pressure of the hand, the old friends parted.

"What a hypocrite the woman is!" cries Mrs. Whiteflock when the door is closed; "I hope she won't come here again for one while!" And then she opens Peter's shirt and applies the blister with a will.

"Well," says Mrs. Fairfax, mentally, as she allows the gate to slam behind her; "that girl Martha is a chip of the

old block, sure enough! They're all a pretty set, but I would not 'a' believed they were quite so bad, if I hadn't 'a' seen with my own eyes! What is the world coming to? Just to think of that little chit of a girl — not fifteen! If Sister Whiteflock doesn't get her pay, I'm mistaken; that's all." And she turns aside from the direct path homeward, in order to make a little call at Brother Timpson's and unburden her mind, but on reflection she concluded that if the secret of which she was now sole mistress were to get abroad, it might thwart the very end she hoped for; she therefore contented herself with some vague hints and insinuations, and at last took her solitary way homeward across the fields, trampling through the weeds in preference to walking in the open path, as some alleviation to her feelings, for there was perilous stuff pent up within her bosom.

The following morning while they were yet at breakfast, Margaret sipping tea with a little dry toast — the mother had reduced her diet to correspond with the doctor's directions to Peter — Wolf, as he sat upright in the door, gave a growl of alarm and defiance; the next moment wheels were heard grating along the graveled road, and there was Mr. Lightwait in the butcher's carryall.

"I thought perhaps you would like to drive to town with us, Sister Fairfax," he said, with that smile of his that hovered close upon gravity, "and am come, as you see, amply provided."

"But what a wretched horse and harness and things," cries Margaret, laughing out, and beginning to eat the toast which she has hitherto only made a pretence of eating.

"O, you are ashamed to drive with me, are you, my proud young lady! then we shall have to leave her at home, shan't we, Sister Fairfax?"

"Indeed I would not dare allow her to go out of the house without first consulting Doctor Allprice," replies the mother with great concern. And then she tells how very bad Peter Whiteflock is — "You would never think it," she says, "to see him; he eats, sleeps, and, to all appearance, is well as can be, but la me! what do we in our ignorance know? I was with him yesterday when Doctor Allprice came, and if you had heard his orders I rather guess you would think he was sick! why he won't allow him one mouthful of meat, nor hardly anything else!" And in this

statement she was not so far from the truth as it happened to her to be sometimes.

"I feel so much better, indeed I do!" says Margaret, appealing to her mother.

"Don't be alarmed," says Mr. Lightwait, patting her cheek, "I have come to take you to see our poor Samuel, and I propose to carry out my intention, that is to say, unless your good mother and Doctor Allprice (for whose authority I entertain the highest respect) should set themselves bodily as well as wilfully against me."

"I shall cast the responsibility all upon you, then, dear Brother Lightwait," says Mrs. Fairfax, playfully shaking her finger in his face. Then she said, of course she must go; she could not think of trusting Margaret alone so far from her protecting care.

Doctor Allprice will hear of this, she said to herself, and then I shall be even with him! Mr. Hoops and the well-bucket sunk into insignificance in comparison with this great affair.

Margaret was soon ready. She had not to bestow so much care upon her toilet as the mother, and her pale face looked very charming under the rose-colored hood tied so close beneath her chin.

"I will take the seat beside you, Brother Lightwait," says Mrs. Fairfax, "I am so fond of looking at the horse!"

The morning was one of the most beautiful of the summer, with that delicious softness in the air, so like a bath of fine odors, that characterizes the mornings and evenings of southern Ohio. The hay-making was going on in the fields by the way, the cows yet stood in the milking yards with their sunrise shadows, tall and fantastic, beside them, the smoke was curling from the homesteads, and the busy housewives plying their morning care about the doors and cool well-side pavements. The roads were in the best order, so that in spite of the rickety carryall and the clumsy, big-headed and ill-conditioned animal before it, the drive was really charming. After half an hour, the farms began to diminish to garden plots, and the farmhouses with their dingy walls and low porches, to give place to white and sparkling villas, and directly, where the high hills dropped abruptly, to the mill-creek valley a blue gleam of the River of Beauty might be caught between the gray roofs and

clustering spires of the Queen City, now distinctly visible. Down, and down, and down, past the wooded slope where the Spring Grove Cemetery now lies in its serene beauty, but where then whipporwills held court, and filled all the shadowy place with their melancholy music, across the dusty old bridge, and the city disappears again, and nothing is to be seen but the green ring of hills with which it is so completely hemmed in.

And now they come upon those neat and thrifty vegetable gardens, that lie, acre upon acre, and field against field, sparkling and gleaming in dew and sun, their green freshness and golden ripeness and flowering bloom, showing along the bed of the valley like one of those variegated quilts which thriving housewives cunningly piece together. But fast the gardens slipped behind, and the dewy freshness gave place to dryness and dust, and then came the smoke and din and clatter of factories, the vile odors of soap and bone boiling, and the shocking closeness and endless continuity of the swine and cattle-pens. Mrs. Fairfax poured out her shallow stream of talk all the same, but Margaret pulled her hood down about her eyes, silently troubled about these, and many other things.

"I dare say you have friends to see, shopping, and other matters on hand, that will take up your morning;" Mr. Lightwait says, as they crossed the bridge of the canal and turned toward Main Street, "and for my part, I have to visit the Book Concern, beside a dozen other places. So, with your approval, we will postpone our call upon Samuel until the afternoon."

"With all my heart," responds Mrs. Fairfax, "the longer delayed the better."

Margaret stifled the sigh that rose to her lip, and sought to reconcile her disappointed heart with the reflection that the delay could not be for long now, at any rate. A time and place of reunion were agreed upon, and the ladies at length set down somewhere in the neighborhood of Fifth and Walnut streets, where Mrs. Fairfax proposed to purchase sundry trifles for the adornment of her charming person.

There was here no touch of the coolness and freshness of the country morning; the sun was nearly at the meridian now, and the oppression of the hot pavement beneath her feet and the close walls about her, caused Margaret to stagger and put her hand to her brow.

"What's the matter now?" says the mother, all sweetness gone from her voice.

"Nothing," Margaret answers, trying to gather her weakness into strength, as she best could.

"I knew well enough it would be so!" says the mother, exulting, as it seemed, in the fulfilment of her prediction, and without offering so much as a helping hand, she walked stoutly forward, pausing only to catch at the calicoes, flannels and ribbons, flaunting over the doorways of the shops. Sometimes she looked back, to be sure, but with an irritated, mortified, and reproachful expression.

So for two long hours the sick girl, smothered under her woollen hood and shawl, dragged after the mother, who was an inveterate bargain-hunter, up and down and across and back, out and in the self-same shops over and over. Whether she wanted an article, or whether she didn't, was all one. She must needs know the price, hold it up to the light, and pull and stretch and cheapen it.

At length a blindness came upon Margaret's eyes, and the hot pavement seemed to be whirling under her feet, and all breathless, overtaking her mother, and catching at her sleeve as she was making a dive at a strip of coarse, but brilliantly dyed carpet that from a high window swung low to the street, she said, "I am fainting, I must have a drink of water, I can't see anything."

"Bless my heart, what a child you are! here, you mustn't fall in the street, what will folks think!" And, reluctantly letting go the carpet, she took her by the shoulder, and brought her somewhat round by means of a smart shake. Then she pulled her across the street and into a basement grocery store that stood on the corner of what was then Western Row and Baker's Alley. An unpleasant odor pervaded the place, made of a combination of fishes, fowls, liquors and spices, the smells of whiskey and codfish being predominant.

The woman who tended the shop made haste to fetch a glass of water from the hydrant at the door, warm as dish water, and not so pellucid as a dewdrop, but offered with right good will, and most gratefully accepted.

"Can I leave her here for an hour or so?" says Mrs. Fairfax as soon as Margaret, having swallowed the draught, began to revive a little. "She's got the nasty chills, but she

would come to town to-day in spite of everything, and now she has to pay for it!"

"Poor dear!" says the kind-hearted woman, "I've had the ager myself; it's shook all the teeth out o' my head purty nigh—see!" And pushing her upper lip aside with her finger, she exhibited the toothless gums, talking in a mumbling voice while the exhibition was going on.

In course the girl could stay as long as she would, and she would be obliged to her for her company into the bargain.

"Run, Leonora, and fetch your ma's rocking-chair! and mind, Leonora, that you don't disturb your pa!"

"She shall have something better than a barrel to set on, too," when the child returned, staggering under the weight of a big arm-chair.

"You must not let her be too troublesome." And Mrs. Fairfax peeps into the little fly-specked looking-glass that hangs against the casement of the broad window, and so she goes away.

"Live anywhere's nigh?" says the woman, seating herself on the whiskey barrel which at her urgent solicitation Margaret had exchanged for the chair. She named the place of her residence, languidly and without looking up.

"Bloomington!" says the woman, "lawsy marsy, there's the place where Father Goodman was for a couple o' year."

Margaret looks up now and observes the woman. She had a baby at her bosom, and her dress, negligently open, showed several inches of corset-board, thick as a stave, together with a good deal of coarse, soiled embroidery. She had crossed one knee over the other, and with the foot that touched the floor swayed herself to and fro on the barrel with as much ease and comfort, apparently, as though she were seated in her own rocking-chair.

She wore a high, carved comb in her thin flaxen hair—her sleeves were pushed above her elbows—her gaiters, once fine, were unstrung, lop-sided and greasy, and the heavy, filled hoops of her ear-rings had slitted her ears nearly in two. She had quite a wasp's waist, and her slazy lilac silk was flounced to the knees with "pinked" flounces.

She had been a belle, no doubt, in her girlhood. Her baby had a big, blotchy head, a nose sunken well out of sight between its fat cheeks, and the fingers of one hand all webbed together.

It was dressed, however, after the manner of more promising darlings; the neck, arms and part of the bust, bare, and with petticoats duly embroidered, and of such extreme length as to trail constantly along the sawdust and tobacco quids that sprinkled the floor.

But with all its hopelessness and deformity, it was evidently a treasure in the eyes of the mother, for she said, shaking it loose from her bosom and holding it up for the admiration of Margaret, "It ain't nigh so purty as some of 'em have been — I've had six — but if it wasn't for its nose, — that comes o' *his* drinking, I reckon, — and if its hand is kep' out o' sight, it looks as well as anybody's baby!" And then she threatened to eat it up alive; it was such a darling rose-bud, and so sweet, she couldn't help it, she said.

"Do you know Father Goodman?" Margaret asked, so soon as her politeness would allow her to give over admiration of the wonderful baby.

"Know him? well, I reckon I do. My own father is class-leader in the church he's over now; it's two hundred mile from here, at a place called Big Bend; not much of a town, but mighty nice folks there, they say. We expect father in October, along after potatoes is dug; he don't bring no potatoes to sell, though; he's rich and comes to visit me and the children. Father never liked him, he didn't; fact is, 'twas a runaway match between him and me; marry in haste and repent at leisure, that's about the way of it! He's drunk up stairs now, and as cross as a bear. Laws, I wish you could see him; he's a sight, I can tell you, — his face is nigh about as red as the baby's petticoat. Would you like to go up and peek through the crack o' the door? It's just as good as to see a hyena, all kind o' bristled up like as if he was a wild beast!" No, Margaret would not care to see him; she was quite satisfied with what she had heard.

"Heard!" says the woman, "hearing is nothing! If I should just tell you what I've underwent! I wouldn't have my folks to know it, though, for half the grocery. Why, last year when my father was here I kept him locked up in the back-cellar for nigh onto a week, and when he screeched and scratched round I pretended 'twas the cat — father being some deaf, you see! He's a-coming agin, father is, in October; he expects to get here by the fifth, father does, and to start back to the Big Bend country by the tenth,

anyhow; he don't believe in long visits, father don't, and what I'll do with him, then, the dear only knows! but maybe some way'll be pinte out as it was afore." Then she told Margaret that he was just as good a husband as ever was when he wasn't in liquor, and the best of providers.

"He doesn't get into one of his regular tantrums very often," she says, "not more than once a week, anyhow, and they don't last more than two or three days for the most part, and when they're onto him I always tie him to the bed-post with a particular kind of knot I use for such occasions special, and he can't ontie himself till the worst is over, and that's a great mercy — he's tied now; won't you peek in? 'taint but a step."

And then she says, "That's why I'm in the store, me and the young 'uns; when he's to himself he won't allow it. No, indeed, he'll hardly allow me to wet my hands, he's that fond of me." And so for two hours she ran on, now praising him and now blaming him, affecting between whiles to devour the hands, especially the club-hand, of her baby, and in reality devouring scraps of smoked jowls and bacon hams with which the wall beside her was garnished, and which she wrenched and twisted away with her dirty ringed fingers; her dress gaping wide all the time, and the little nose of the baby wriggling almost continually among the grimy embroideries.

The shops proved a fascination too strong for Mrs. Fairfax, as they were likely to do, and the time of her return was delayed an hour beyond the one appointed. She was hungry and tired and out of humor, she said, though she might have spared herself the trouble of mentioning the latter infirmity, as it spoke plainly for itself, and if she had her way, would prefer to go home at once. She didn't wish to see old Sam Dale for her part, and she couldn't imagine why Margaret should wish to see him. He was just the last person under the sun that she had desired to see at any time; much less did she desire to see him now that he was either turned fool or gone crazy — no one knew which, nor cared.

They found Mr. Lightwait at the place agreed upon. He had been waiting some time, he said, but he manifested no impatience; on the contrary, he was equable and quietly genial, as ever; he only feared, he said, looking at his watch, that they might be too late to see Samuel; the hours for

admitting visitors expired at three o'clock, and it was near that time now. Then Mrs. Fairfax put her face down very close, and they had a little whispered consultation, at the close of which she had brightened up a good deal, and expressed a hope that they might not be too late.

This was all long before that excellent asylum for the insane, which now, with its ample buildings and beautiful grounds, adorns one of the suburbs of the "Queen City," was projected; and when a single ward of the city hospital was used for the accommodation and treatment of lunatics.

"Here we are!" cries Mrs. Fairfax, as she jumped to the ground, in a state of happy excitement, and saw the shambling legs and cadaverous faces through the high railing of iron that inclosed the hospital yard. Margaret pressed one hand hard against her beating heart, scarcely daring to raise her eyes lest she might discover at one of the grated windows the face she so longed, yet dreaded, to see.

Mr. Lightwait, with considerate tenderness, gave her his arm, and they went in through the great creaking doors, and climbed a long flight of bare, iron-faced stairs, and were ushered into the matron's parlor. There they were kept waiting a good while, and the time seemed to Margaret twice as long as it was in reality. Mr. Lightwait had seated himself close beside her, and as in her nervous agitation she picked at the old hair-cloth of the sofa, he reassured her from time to time with a smile, a pressure of the hand, or a whispered word. When the matron appeared at last, a gaunt woman in musty black, she trembled outright. It was as she feared, too late; and the matron, as she took out her gold watch to confirm her decision, seemed glad to have it so; her high nose grew higher, and her black eyes blacker, with satisfaction, as she silently shook her head.

Mr. Lightwait yielded the point with such graceful deference (it was just as he had designed it should be) that some of her austerity immediately gave way — there was a great deal worth seeing, she said, two women just dead within five minutes, in the poor ward. She would have them shown round, although the time for seeing visitors was passed. She could not, however, promise them the sight of a single lunatic, least of all that terrible one they had had come to see. She was afraid of him, for her part; he looked so ferocious and bloodthirsty! He was shut up in one of the "strong

rooms" — they might see, if they chose, a room like his, so as to know for themselves what sort of accommodations they gave to murderers! This fellow was no doubt affecting his craziness in order to escape punishment, but she rather thought he would be cured, if the present treatment were continued long enough.

"Of course you will see the corpses!" she said, at last, leading the way. And then she said she thought ministers of the gospel, and she understood Mr. Lightwait was one, ought to embrace every opportunity of looking upon the dead, though what virtue went with such employment she did not explain.

There they were — fifty cot-beds all in a row, running down the centre of the long, narrow room. The walls, floor, tables, everything was bare, and two of the beds were bare of bed-clothes and pillows, and on these lay the bodies of the two dead women — the naked feet sticking up stiff — the bust protruding and the head low. About the jaws of one a white handkerchief was tied, and over the eyelids of the other a vial of laudanum and a pill-box were placed.

Some of the faces were spotted, some white and ghastly, and some scarlet with fever, and they were mostly the faces of women, old, or far past middle life, but here and there was a head with a crown of bright young hair, and here and there a hand, smooth and fair as a lily, picked at the counterpane or waved itself anxiously to and fro, as though it were beckoning to that shadowy helper, feared now no longer.

The atmosphere was oppressive, and the sights and sounds appalling to one unaccustomed to such a place, and Margaret turned away, faint and sick.

"There, child!" says the matron, "this will revive you!" and lifting her skirt, she took from the huge pocket that dangled against her quilted petticoat a piece, or rather lump, of greasy, highly spiced pound cake! "It's got cinnamon in it," she urges, "and I mostly keep it in my pocket, especially when I go about the corpses!"

Margaret declined the cake, but accepted smelling-salts; and when she was a little better, the matron insisted on her seeing some of the lunatics — "that'll fetch you up directly," she says.

That night upon her little bed at home, both awake and in her sleep, Margaret lived the whole scene over. She saw

the long row of narrow beds with the livid faces looking out of them, the old, withered hands that had done their last work, the scrawny necks turning this way and that, and the dull, sunken eyes looking hopelessly out of the leaden circles about them. She saw the two dead bodies stretched straight on their coarse sheets, but what haunted her more than the rest was the burning cheek and flashing eyes of a young girl, the golden tangles of whose long hair lay in a shining heap in her bosom; they had just been cut off, but she clutched them close and twisted her slender white fingers among them as if she could not and would not give them up. "She is from the country," the matron had said, and then she had whispered with Mrs. Fairfax, and the two women had shaken their heads, and this was all; but the imagination of Margaret made up such a history of love betrayed, of desertion and poverty and sickness, that she moaned as she spun it out.

She saw the "strong rooms," with their hard, bare walls and floors, the grated window, so high and so small, the iron bedstead, the iron stanchion and ring, and the door, so heavy and so strongly secured with bars and bolts; the aperture, no bigger than a rat-hole, for the secret observations of the keeper, and at each of these spaces she saw in her mind's eye, one sad, reproachful face.

The memory of the lunatics was less horrible; the gibbering women going up and down in their fantastic apparel, and with close-cut locks and unmeaning eyes, did not haunt her as did these cells, nor as did the hot-cheeked girl with her lost treasure hugged to her bosom.

Even the "incurables" in their straight jackets and scanty petticoats, tied like so many corpses to their wooden chairs, came back to her less vividly. She could see them all, the unsexed and hairy-faced, those who had grown big and coarse as beasts, and those whose limbs were become crooked and knotty and bulged and bunched, the big flippers of feet, the filmy eyes, fixed as if set, the long, loose ears, the gray heads and the snow-white heads, they were before her, visible through all the dark, visible no matter how fast she shut her eyelids down. But, crowding them back, and demanding a place closer than any of them, was the image of him she had failed to see, for awake or in sleep, her heart was filled with the thought of Samuel.

Should she ever see him again, and if so, what would he say to her? She had no question as to what she should say to him. She would tell him that she loved him, let come what would.

And this resolve comforted her; a downright resolve always helps us, one way or another; sometimes from the execution of our resolve.

CHAPTER XV.

“CHARLEY GAY.”



WHEN Miss Kathreine Lightwait was yet in her teens she had a lover; one Charles Parsons Gayfeather, a student, at the time, in the university near the residence of her father. He was a stranger in the neighborhood — a handsome, light-hearted, good-humored fellow, that everybody liked but few persons trusted much. He was known in his college as Charley Gay, and if an old horse were to be got into chapel, or a trap to be set for the legs of some innocent professor, Charley Gay was on hand.

He had a great knack of committing his lessons, so that he could keep up with his class and still devote a good portion of his time to mischief. He had pretty hands, set off with a variety of costly rings; hair colored like a ripe acorn, and as bright and shining as that, and eyes that all the girls thought marvels of depth and tenderness. He dressed well, though rather jauntily, perhaps, and was always to be seen at church, because the girls were there, most likely, and at all gatherings of every kind that took place.

“He was open-hearted as well as open-eyed, and everybody came to know him, and to like him as before said, with that sort of easy liking that stops short of trusting. Among the young ladies there were many perhaps who might have trusted, but we have only to do with the one who did trust.

Katherine Lightwait was almost as gay and careless as he in those times, and somehow her heart-strings got into his beautiful white hands, and stayed there, in despite of all efforts of father and mother to pull them thence.

"You must not see the young fellow, Kate," the bishop had said; "not alone, certainly; I don't like him — that is, I don't believe in him; and it is much wiser and better that you should do as I wish, and be guided by your mother and me in this thing; promise me, my dear, and Heaven help you to keep your promise sacred!"

And Katherine fell pouting, at first, and then to pleading, and in the end to tears: but the father could not relent, conscientiously, and therefore would not relent at all; and Katherine, seeing how matters stood, dried her eyes and gave the required promise, secretly resolved that she would see "Charley" when and where she could.

"Our Kate is a good girl, Bethy," the bishop said, kissing the pale cheek of his wife, "and we must give her more head since we deny her her heart."

So Katherine had her head and went about where she would, seeing her Charley and confiding to him all her troubles under the influence of the girlish delusion that he could make everything right.

And for the time being, when he kissed her and called her his pretty Kate, and his poor Kate, and his own Kate, everything was right.

He could not study his books, he said, and he didn't care whether he knew his lessons or not; he didn't care for the college fellows any more; he didn't care for anything in the world but her! "O Kate, if you cared half as much for me!"

At first they were very cautious in choosing the time and place of their interviews, but success gradually emboldened them; and what seemed at first a hazardous thing began to seem in its frequent repetitions but a small thing, and from the grape-vine bower in Cousin Martha's garden, or the violet bank under the beech tree, Charley would sometimes walk with Kate almost to the very gate of home. How could she refuse him when it drove him to despair to lose her out of his sight!

If she would only run away with him and escape the cruel oppression in which she was forced to live! "Dear, dear

Kate, if you only would, you should never have your sweet will crossed again, never! I can never love but you, my Kate, and your image must follow me to the grave!"

One summer night when Katherine was in her night-dress, and just about going to bed, she heard a little noise at her window, like the flutter of a bird's wing, and turning hastily round, there, sure enough, was something white as snow coming through the open sash. The next moment she was standing by the lamp reading, all of a tremble; it was a love-letter that had been tossed in at the window.

When Katherine had read the writing she would not forbear peeping out, and there, crouching under the ivy-vine that clambered against the wall up to the very gable, who should she see but Charley!

"Do not bid me go away, sweet Kate," he whispered up to her; "it is better to lie here and die here, than to live anywhere else!"

Then she kissed her hand to him: "O Charley, Charley, you must go! What if you should be found there? for mercy's sake, for your own dear sake, rise and go!" But he would not go for mercy's sake nor for his own sake; if it were for her sake, why then he would go.

"For my sake, then, dear Charley!" And she reached her arms down low as though she would fain touch his head and bless him.

"Some token, then, my Kate; some precious little token of your love? A tress from that dear head; a flower; the smallest leaf of a flower; anything that you have touched and blessed!"

"But, Charley, I have no flower, and I cannot tear for you a tress of my hair; go with just my love — you have all that!"

"Cruel Kate; I cannot, will not go — not without some precious sign of your love!"

Then she tore the lace from her sleeve and threw it down to him, and with a thousand whispered thanks and blessings he stole away.

After this there were other interviews at the chamber window, continued longer and full of all the promises and protestations that can be imagined, from midsummer till autumn, and from autumn till early winter they had gone on; and at last one night, when a quarterly meeting kept the good

bishop and his wife late from home, Charley stayed to a very imprudent hour.

Katherine might have seen him at the garden gate, or in the parlor, but she had said to her father, "I will not go out of my chamber while you are gone;" and so true was she in her falsehood, that she would not break her promise, and the interview was held in the accustomed way. And yet not quite in the accustomed way.

It was cloudy upon this night, and about nine o'clock the snow-flakes began to slide slantwise down the air, and the wind to make moans that were pitiful about the corners of the old house.

"Dear Kate, I am dying of cold," says Charley, "and your bright, warm chamber so near; isn't it cruel?"

"Ah, cruel indeed! What can I do for you; throw you down my shawl?"

Then he said, "He would climb to the window, and she should put her arms about him and that would make him so warm, and O so happy, beside!"

In vain Katherine said no, this could not be; her heart was all on his side as against her words; this he knew, his arms were strong, his will stronger, the vine against the wall served as a sort of ladder, and while she was saying, "No, Charley, this must not be," he was there, panting on the window seat, and her arms were about him and her face close to his.

The snow wrapt them all round in its mantle, but they did not feel it, and the hours went by like minutes, and the midnight drew near. At last Katherine said he must go, she would not grant another minute; she was doing so wrong, so very wrong, and it was so late. Then Charley said it was not late, and she was doing no wrong, and if she loved him she would never speak such words; for if she thought them she would hush them up and please him in spite of them.

Then they had a little quarrel — a very tender, loving quarrel — but one that required to be made up, nevertheless, and all this required time; and directly the click of the gate-latch surprised them and set their hearts beating with new sensations. It was the bishop coming home with his wife and much company, to boot.

"What is this?" he cries, swinging his lantern in wide cir-

cles about. "Some thief, perhaps, let us see!" And straight he began to follow the foot-prints which the slowly-falling snow had not yet obliterated. Nearer, clearer came the voices; the light was gleaming round the corner of the house.

"Now, the Lord have mercy! what shall we do?" cries Katherine, in an agony of distress.

"This, my sweet Kate, and all shall yet be safe!" and he leaped into the chamber, leaving all the ivy-vine shaking from top to bottom, and the snow tumbling from it in thick showers. There was a flutter of garments still at the window when the bishop lifted his eyes. "Good wife," he said, in a still, slow voice, such as he only used when deeply moved, "our Kate must be looked after — God knoweth what may have happened — we are all liable to temptation, and she among the rest: take with you some one or two of our sisters here, and go at once to her chamber. She must not be spared; if she have merited the rod, the rod must fall, though it were on her naked soul, and though she were twice my child. Go at once, dear Bethy, and the Lord have mercy, and make my fears to be without foundation." -

From this command there was no appeal, and the true wife and tender, trembling mother obeyed without a word.

Alas for Katherine! poor, frightened child, what could she do? The father beneath the open window, the mother on the stair — she did the worst that was possible — instinct taught her to hide, to screen herself and her lover somewhere; and where of all things should it be but within the curtains of the bed! So there they were, sitting side by side, and locked within each other's arms from very fright.

Of course Katherine was disgraced beyond all hope; the father would not have shielded her if he could, and the mother dare not. The whole church and the whole neighborhood were soon aware of the scandal; the bishop made public acknowledgment of his shameful humiliation in his Sunday morning sermon, and the grief-stricken mother went out of the church with her head bowed low, so low that it could never lift itself up, as it had done, any more. From that sorrowful day she drooped as a flower from which the dew and the light are withdrawn, and when the snows of another winter fell, her tender eyes were done with tears.

Charles Parsons Gayfeather was expelled from college in

disgrace, and left the neighborhood for the neighborhood's good, as the people said, leaving with Katherine's cousin Martha a letter for Katherine, in which he called her, as of old, his sweet Kate, and vowed himself by all that was good on earth and glorious in heaven, to eternal fidelity. "When I am rich, as I shall be sometime, my sweet Kate," he said, "I shall come back and carry you off in spite of them all; it may be twenty years hence, but I shall come. Wait in patience and in hope, sweet Kate, as I shall."

And while Katherine carried this letter in her bosom, reading it over and over and finding in it a world of precious consolation long after she knew it by heart, still deriving new meanings and new solace from the old, old story, the good bishop one day said to his wife, "Bethy darling, we must try to save our remaining child, in spite of our great enemy, the devil." So what should they resolve upon in the end, but to make a preacher of John Hamlyn.

"John!" calls the bishop, "John Hamlyn Lightwait, come here, instantly!"

The lad thus summoned, was at the moment engaged in the pleasing occupation of flying his kite, and as it happened, his kite had gone very high, to the admiration of a dozen lookers-on as well as of himself, and perhaps no leader ever hauled down his colors with a keener sense of suffering, than he that high-soaring kite.

There was no appeal, that he knew very well, and as he wound in the long line, hand over hand, and the kite sidled down, the magnificent tail fluttering and flowing behind, the moisture gathered to drops in his eyes, and trembled along his cheeks in spite of all he could do.

"Johnny Lightwait's a-cryin'!" shouted a rough lad whose clothes were not so fine as John's, and whose kite would not fly so high. "He's a-cryin' like a baby; good, good!"

There was a shout of derision among those who were looking on, but from the group one little girl stepped forth, her round face flushed at the indignity, and putting her two arms, tanned brown as leather, about his neck, kissed him right before them all.

"Never mind, Johnny," she says; "I like you whether your kite is down or up;" and with the corner of her blue "bib" apron, she wiped the tears from his face. She was

the child of poor parents, evidently ; her bare feet, scratched with briars, her torn dress, and the soiled tangles of her hair, all bespoke that, but the sweetness of her expression, now that her sympathy was aroused, was something wonderful. If a rose-bud should burst into open flower in an instant, it would not be more strangely sudden than the transformation of her countenance when the hoot against her favorite was raised ; and as she dropt her brown arms from his neck and stood trembling and dilating before him, she was like a rose that has been the sport of some tempest ; red, ruffled, but sweet as she could be, withal.

Her eyes were like a dove's in their soft tenderness, and her complexion would have been white as milk but for the tan, as might be seen by the shoulder drawn up out of the dress above where it was used to be tied, showing a new moon of pure pearl under the dusky brown.

"O, I don't mind !" says John ; he did not say, "so long as you care for me ;" but he looked it, and with his kite in his arm he went into the house, she following him with her dove's eyes.

"Your mother and I have concluded to make a preacher of you, my son," says the bishop ; and denuding the kite of its very magnificent tail, with a light dash of his hand, he tossed it into the fire.

"O father ! father !" cries John ; and then he fell kicking and screaming and was led away by the ear, and locked fast in a closet.

After three hours of solitary confinement, he was informed by the bishop, speaking through the key-hole, that if he could behave himself, having no more to do with kites and little beggar girls, he might come out ! " to which he replied only by sullen sobs, and kicks against the door. Three hours more produced in some sort the desired effect, and he was let out and sent to bed supperless, for his obstinacy, where he told his sister confidentially that he would fly a kite whenever he had a mind, and play with whatever little girl he fancied, into the bargain !

Thus the work of making a preacher of the bishop's son began, and the reader knows already how it ended.

Poor Katherine ! Months and months she kept her lover's letter as the most precious of her treasures, clutching it in all her trouble as though it were the only anchor of her hope.

At last, one day when she saw past all doubt that shadow we so much fear, sitting at the hearth-side, and making all her mother's face to be as the face of one who is done with the things of this world, she went away by herself, and taking the letter from her bosom, locked it out of her sight.

There came another day, before long, when she took the letter from the drawer, all sweet with the scent of the rose-leaves that had been about it, and tearing it to little fragments, gave it to the winds to carry whithersoever they would.

Charley, her own Charley, pledged to be faithful unto death, was married — married to a widow ten years his senior, and possessed of five children and twenty-five thousand dollars !

And this, then, was the way he got rich and the way he did *not* come back to carry off his sweet Kate !

And what should Katherine do now for consolation but turn to the church ? There was nothing else to do. She had lost all faith in man, and was driven, as it were, to God. Not with any childlike confidence and hope, but as a last desperate refuge. Her heart did not break nor bend under its affliction, but it slowly withered and hardened, like a piece of sound timber from which the sap has been all withdrawn.

She stripped off the rings from her fingers, and the furbelows and flowers from her bonnets — pinned her shawl with a sort of sad severity, combed her long, bright hair in the most unbecoming of styles, and betook herself straight to the church. I said wrongly, she went to God, she only went to the church ; she did not get religion when she renounced the world, and what had been born in her died out with her love, so that she was left a creature of mere forms and ceremonies with dry blood about her heart, and a dry creed about her soul.

Twenty years she had lived in this state, doing what she considered to be her duty, in that hard way that begets neither grace in one's self, nor gratitude in others ; that is, in fact, nothing better than the sowing of withered seed among rocks, where there is no possibility of quickening in the first place, and no possibility of taking root if there were quickening. She seemed constantly to avenge herself on herself for the burden she had assumed, and not only so, but

also upon her friends, if friends she could be said to have, who never gave any part of herself with her service. All men were alike to her, and all women, and both sexes the same as one, or as neither. Whether it was a child, an old man, a young man, or a maid with whom she associated, she remained the same—uninfluenced, untouched, all apart and separate. She had no need, apparently, that any human being could fill; she never required any service that a servant could not as well render as a friend, and never by look or sign asked sympathy. She dressed with severe simplicity, ruled her horse and her brother with the authority of law, and not with the right of gentleness and love; went abroad only for charitable purposes, and to church, and commanded from her neighbors a sort of fearful respect, rather than cheerful admiration.

She ruled her brother, John Hamlyn, not only with the authority of law, but with a rod of iron as well; a rod that did not come down upon his bare shoulders, to be sure, but was always felt to be imminent, so that he lived all his days in a state of apprehension, as one might with a naked sword swinging over his pathway, this way and that. She was as a curb in his mouth, a check-rein upon his neck, and a general restraint upon all his actions; only in thought was he free, except it were out of her sight.

This was one reason, perhaps, why he was so prone to overstep the common and accepted boundaries; they were made too broad, too high, too offensively conspicuous. She was older than he by a number of years, and while he was yet in his boyhood and youth, there was some show of right in this authority, but when he came to man's estate she did not in the least relax. She had splinted up the weak side of her own nature and bore herself as loftily as if she had never known a weakness.

Twenty years she had been living this life of religious mechanism, when a little incident occurred one day that knocked her theories to "everlasting smash," and left her on the basis of our common nature and common humanity.

It was about ten days, perhaps, subsequent to the visit (which was no visit at all) of John Hamlyn to Samuel, that the brother and sister sat towards the close of the day on the piazza fronting the main road. The great show had come to town, the big tent was up on the village common, and

half the day wagon loads of tigers, leopards, curious birds, and hideous snakes had been stringing along the highway. The camels with their high backs, and the elephants under canvas covers, with such big round holes for their eyes, had gone by, and all about the parsonage, at least, was become quiet again.

"Of course you will not countenance this vulgar show of monkey tricks and pony races," says Katherine, glancing from the great white tent toward her brother.

"And suppose I should?" says John, making letters with the point of his forefinger on the baluster.

"Suppose you should? Why John, I can't suppose that, knowing you as I do."

"And what if it should turn out that you do not know me quite so well as you think? What if I should go to the show and take the prettiest girl the village can muster? I say what then, Kate? Who would be any the worse for it?"

"Mustering a pretty girl, to be sure! how degenerate you are! But as for knowing you, I am not quite sure I do know you, after that disgraceful affair the other day. I wonder at you, John Hamlyn!" She always called his name in full when she took him to task with unusual severity. He understood very well that she alluded to his visit to Samuel, but more especially with reference to Margaret.

He said, therefore, in reply: "Visit the widow and the fatherless in their afflictions," writing all the while on the baluster to help him out, even though he answered her from Scripture.

"The devil can quote Scripture," says Katherine; and then she says, "I am more and more convinced that I do not know you, John Hamlyn!"

"Are you quite sure you know yourself, my good sister?"

"Perfectly sure, sir!"

And then she said she was sure of another thing, and that was that little Margaret Fairfax should never rule her, nor her house, nor her brother's house, — not if she could prevent it! She would rather see him dead before her than come to such a pass!

"Well, Kate, I have not climbed to her chamber-window, and I don't mean to; what I have done I have done openly and above board, and I have not seen her since the affair you are pleased to call disgraceful, if it will do you any good to know it."

He had never mentioned the old lover to his sister till now, even by remote insinuation; he had never, indeed, addressed her with so much spirit, in all his life, and when he had done he almost trembled at his own audacity, and wrote very hard upon the baluster, looking down.

There are women who never fully appreciate kindness and forbearance, — women to whom, indeed, a little restraint is wholesome, — who constantly impinge more and more upon liberty, until they come to regard concession as their right, and their own wills as supreme. Such a woman was Katherine Lightwait; if her father had lived to keep a strong hand upon her, she would have been a wiser and a worthier woman. Her brother she had stood in no fear of till now, when she instantly assumed a more pacific attitude, quietly turning the conversation to other channels. But somehow it got back again to the show, by and by.

"You really have no serious intentions of going there?" said Katherine; "think how it would look!"

"That is a common mistake, sister; we think too much how things look, and too little what things be; now as to this show, there is one light in which it may be really regarded as a benefaction; the weary, worn-out wives and daughters of farmers, who see no holiday from year's end to year's end, find there recreation that is pleasant and not unprofitable. They take a lesson in natural history while at the same time they take pleasure; nor is it for us to despise any of the works of God, as you seem to do. He made the beast of the field, and the bird of the air, and all the scaly tribes of the waters, and when He had made them He pronounced them good. So, Kate, I am inclined to go to the show, after all, shake hands with my neighbors, and wonder at the monkeys and the ponies, and Kate, do you know I would like to ride the elephant!"

"John Hamlyn!" Then Katherine repressed herself and said the more was the pity, and she was sorry for it.

"And so, dear Kate, am I, but you see when I was a boy, when it was my time to ride an elephant, that natural desire was repressed and crushed down within me, not crushed out, and the consequence is, I cannot this day see an elephant without an almost insane longing to be boosted up and ride."

"Boosted! What a shocking word! Will you never leave off such things, John?"

"You see, Kate, the boost period did not have its needful and rightful expression, and therefore I have never really grown out of it, as I should if I had been boosted in the boost season!"

He shook back his loose locks and laughed heartily at the droll light in which the veritable truth had presented itself to his mind, but Katherine only sighed and looked distressed. At last she said, "You do not seem to understand, John, that your light remarks reflect upon the discipline of our good father, the bishop!"

"Yes I do, Kate, understand it fully, but I find it possible for even a bishop, though he were my father, to have been mistaken. He ruled us with the same iron hand, whereas only you, pardon me, required it, and you, Kate, pardon me again, have made the same mistake after him. You have governed me completely, but you have not changed my nature one whit. Now, would it not have been better to have taken the original wild stock and to have engrafted upon it something finer and higher, rather than to have pruned me off thus, and to leave me but an artificial wilding after all. O Kate, I wish you, or any one, had ever understood me! I am in a false position every way; too bad or too good, and sometimes I don't know which; and to come to the worst, Kate, I am half in love with this little Margaret you so look down on."

"Half in love with what, pray? She has neither mind, manners, nor education, and is in no way fitted to be your mate, with her rustic bringing up, her low stature, and doll-baby face! I am surprised, mortified, and ashamed; but let us say no more about it; marriage with her is not to be thought of."

"You ask what I am in love with?" said John, a good deal taken down in spite of himself; "I am in love just as I am with a rose, or with any other sweet and exquisite thing."

"Yes, and would wear the sweetness out and toss her away just as soon as you would the flower."

"Will you just tell me what you were in love with, when you were in love?"

"That was in my salad days, and I beg you will never speak of it again; if I were to fall in love now, I should know what it was with, and you are a man, with sense and judgment, and in the full maturity of all your powers."

"I don't see that all that helps me much."

"Nor I, to my sorrow; but promise me, at least, that you will not take this girl to the show, and let us say no more about it; the whole subject is abhorrent to me."

Then he gave the promise, and they fell into uncomfortable silence; the one feeling outraged, and the other that he was cut off from human help and sympathy, and that he was not strong enough to stand alone. Many a time before the brother had sought to open his heart to his sister, though he had never braved it out so courageously, but she had always as now pressed it back upon itself and into itself with the same iron hand. He said at last, perhaps to say something, "Shall you go with me to the Bible class this evening, Kate?"

"Certainly," she replied; "why should you ask so foolish a question?" He made no answer but wrote again on the baluster.

The day was ended now and the long shadows joined into one soft shadow that spread over all the landscape. The sun, large and dim, was going down behind a bank of rosy mist, and all the air was filled with that gentle murmur that is soothing as a lullaby. It failed of its usual effect upon the brother and sister, and each felt it to be a relief when the evening stage coach came rattling over the neighboring hill. The eyes of both were fixed upon it as the four grays labored up the ascent, stretching their broad flanks, and nodding their glossy necks as they dragged the great lumbering coach behind them. There was but one passenger outside; a man of middle age, dressed neatly but rather finely for a traveller. He held his hat in his hand, and seemed to be looking about him with a wide-awake interest and keen sense of enjoyment.

"One of the managing showmen, I judge," says John Lightwait, glancing from the stranger to his sister.

"Why should you so judge?" says Katherine sharply; "he looked to me like anything but a showman!" She averted her face as she said this and directly rose and went into the house.

"At the tea-table she seemed strangely absent-minded, breaking the bread into little crumbs on her plate, and saying nothing, and when it was time for the class, she told her brother she believed he would have to excuse her for

that evening — she had a headache and preferred to be alone.

Meantime, the outside passenger of the evening coach was exciting a good deal of attention in the village ; he had taken the best room in the Eagle Hotel, called for the best the house afforded, feeing the servants with unusual liberality, and setting things about him in order, as though with the intention of remaining some time. After supper, with which he drank wine instead of tea, and which he appeared to relish with the keenest zest, he strolled about the village, and in the course of an hour had made the acquaintance of half a dozen of the foremost town's-people, was hand-in-glove with the proprietors of the show, and had been admitted to a sight of the birds and beasts gratuitously.

"That is the parsonage yonder?" he said, as he sat astride a new-made barrel at the door of the cooper-shop, his legs deeply buried in shavings, chopping carelessly with the adze with one hand, and playing with a handsome beard, that was just touched with gray, with the other.

"You're a werry good guesser," says the cooper, as he slipped the apron of bed-ticking over his head — "it is the preacher's house, and a man of wersatile talents he is too."

"Ah, indeed: hope I shall have the pleasure of hearing him; and, by the way, what's his name?"

Then, with a long preface that was no way to the point, the cooper told his name.

"Humph!" says the stranger, setting the adze deep in the stick he was driving at, "Lightwait, Lightwait! it can't be little Bishop John, as his mother used to call him, I imagine." He said this in soliloquy, his white fingers twisting in his beard, and his head turned backward over his shoulder, as if he were looking away to distant years.

"No, sir," says the cooper, "he ain't a bishop; not wer-itable, though his father was, and he is sometimes called the Bishop's son; it's a kind of woluntary compliment like that we pay to him, you understand."

"Yes, I understand — a sort of acknowledgment of his virtues and Christian graces."

"Yes, sir, and not altogether for any wolid wirtues, as I know of; he's good-looking and agreeable."

"Something like me," interposed the stranger, and he laughed lightly; and then he said, hewing very hard with

the adze as he said it, "Is he a man of family? or does he have that beautiful cottage all to himself?"

The cooper did not reply directly, but, taking up the thread of his former thought, said, "As I was remarking, sir, he's agreeable, but as to his wirtues proper, he always seemed to me to be warnished like, rather than bright all through."

"A common case enough, my friend; but did you say he was married? I'm interested in the ladies, you see."

"Well, sir, no sir, I didn't say nothing about it; I didn't understand you to ask."

"I put my question very awkwardly, I suppose, but I certainly meant to inquire if he were married; is he?"

"Well, sir, he ain't married, not wisibly, any how; he hain't been pasture here long."

"I think I shall go and quarter upon him, if he has that sweet cottage all to himself. Do you suppose he would take me in?"

"Well, sir, he might fur's I know. I should think you was about the sort of a chap he'd take to; but I wouldn't wenter to perdict a welcome from his sister: she's a bit of a wixen, I take it."

The stranger's face flushed suddenly. "So there is a woman in the house!" he said. And then he said, "Young and beautiful, of course?" He looked down as he said this, his face coloring more and more.

"No, sir; she ain't purty according to my taste, and she ain't in her wernal days, neither. She's old enough for you, I should say."

The stranger laughed, but the laughter was forced and unnatural; and the cooper went on to say that, to his thinking, the preacher's sister was not nigh so good-looking, nor so good natured, neither, as what the widder Fairfax was, who lived in the brown house over the hill, and who had a daughter old enough to be married.

"Then I shan't find a rival in you? well, so much the better," says the stranger, who had recovered himself a little by this time; "but what's her name — Xantippe?"

"No, sir, you've wentered a wrong guess this time; her name is Katherine; a kind of cross name, I always thought."

"And she is married, of course?"

"Why 'of course,' Mr.?"

"O, I don't know, I simply took it for granted."

"Well, you've wentered wrong agin; she ain't married, and never will be; she's an old maid!"

"Well, I suppose it is not impossible that an old maid should marry."

"Jest about the same thing, I take it; no feller'd have an old maid without he was awful hard run."

"That's your opinion, sir;" and the stranger spoke with more spirit than the circumstances seemed to warrant.

"Yes, sir, it's my opinion, and it's the werdict of all men, too."

And then he said this old maid they were talking about had a lover once, in her youth, so report said, but that he didn't walue her even at her best at a high enough rate to have her; anyhow, he ran off and left her, but that she wamped up her heart somehow, and braved it out purty wal-orously, considerin'.

The stranger sat for some time after this, twisting his white fingers silently in his beard, and then he said, abruptly, "How old should you take me to be, my friend?"

"Well, sir," says the cooper, eyeing him sharply, "if you'd a' been left to the nateral disadvantages o' time, and if you had my old apurn onto you, you'd graze mighty close onto fifty, but with all your adwantages you'd pass with most for a leetle up'ards of forty; but what sot you to ask the question?"

"Simply to know how I appear to strangers; I am, as you guess, coming in sight of fifty; heigh ho! that's getting to be an old man, isn't it?"

"Well, not so wery; I'm forty-two."

"But I have been talking," says the stranger, standing up and changing tone and manner, "wide of the purpose of my visit to your pretty town here; do you happen to know whether a young man of the name of Samuel Dale lives hereabouts?"

Here came out all the story about Samuel, which the reader may be spared.

At the end of it the stranger said he was the uncle of the young man, and that he had but lately fallen heir to a large property, through the death of a relative that had cut himself off with a shilling — one John Cutwild Sparks — a fellow about as strange as his name. And then he said if

Samuel had suffered at the hands of the people thereabout, so much the worse for them.

"Maybe you would not be the man to vindicate him so strongly, for all that," says the cooper, "if it wasn't for the money?"

Then the stranger said something in an apologetic way about having known less of his nephew, in the past, than he had always desired to; their paths in life had kept them separate, and then Samuel was to him, a mere boy!

When the stranger returned to the Eagle Hotel he went straight to the register and making a dash or two across the name he had set down, wrote another beneath it; the name erased was C. G. Parsons; the one substituted was Charles P. Gayfeather. This done, he went to his room, and in the course of an hour came down very carefully dressed, and sauntered leisurely towards the parsonage.

CHAPTER XVI.

SAINT AND SINNER.



At the accustomed hour the Bishop's son, in no very devout frame of mind, came forth from his house, and turned mechanically in the direction of his religious duties.

Presently, as he picked his way among the dusty fennel and thistles that fringed the road-side, there came to his ear a low, dolorous cry, mingled with exclamations so strange and incongruous, that he at once stood still and looked about him.

The voice was that of a child, but there was something, more especially in the tone of the exclamations, that seemed not to belong to childhood. A bitterness, wildness and barbarity, as well as utterness of desolation.

The cart of a travelling hunter had broken down by the

way, and there lay the poor old mare that had drawn it for hundreds of miles, kicking and struggling in her torn and tangled harness, her head flat on the ground, and her hind legs high in the air.

The cart lay on its side somewhat like a dead fish; one tire was knocked square off, and the wheel belonging to it lay in the gutter a dozen yards distant, with half the spokes wrenched out. The cover was stove in, the tail-board splintered, the coupling pole split asunder, and the coupling-bolt, nobody knew where.

The ground was strewn with the hunter's accumulated treasures, for he was coming home from a tramp through the wild woods and over the prairies of the West, laden with a variety of skins, horns, robes and antlers, when it happened to him to drive his mare into a pile of loose stones, and so upset his cart and smash things generally. It happened to him because it had previously happened to him to take a drop too much from the brown jug stowed so carefully away in the bundle of "coon-skins." It was a pitiable heap of ruins altogether, and he, with his shock head stuck through a hole in the cover, looked the saddest ruin of all. His red shirt was gaping wide and showing a bosom as rough and hairy as one of the dried skins in his cart.

He was swearing like a trooper and almost drowning the dolorous cry that at first attracted Mr. Lightwait's attention, and his scowling face, red almost as his shirt, had in it, as he turned it this way and that and twisted it in shape and out of shape, that comical expression of imbecility and wisdom that characterizes a certain stage of drunkenness.

"Look-a-here, stran-n-ger," he called nodding wisely to Mr. Lightwait, "look-a-here! I say, kante yer here nothin'! Want ter tell yer sir, t' I'm a genl'm'n, an' uv you are as I take yer tow be, by yer clothes, yer wonte notice that anythink is outer sorts with me — kaze a real genl'm'n never does.

"I'm from ole Kanetuck, sir, born an' raised thar, an' marred thar, tow, fur that matter — used to nigger waiters, sir, an' the tiptoppest Bourbon and tobaccer, an' that's a fac', by — sir.

D' you har, sir, and d' you understan t' I'm a genl'm'n, born an' raised in ole Kanetuck, sir; now as one genl'm'n's always

proud an' happy to serve another genl'm'n, yer wonte think it quaar t'I ask a favor o' yer, specially when I tell yer t'I propose tow stan' a treat.

"What's yer drink, sir? Bourbon's mine, by ——! an' thar's nothink better'n ole Bourbon—I tell yer that, on the honor uv a Kanetuck genl'm'n! D'you har, sir! I reckon you've got the instinck of a genl'm'n, kaze you've got a genl'm'n's clothes onter yer, an' yer wouldn't mind to cut a switch an' whirp my ole mar' fur me, an' top o' that, guv my little cuss uv a boy thar, a lick or two. Kaze, sir, I'm a real Kanetuck genl'm'n, as is in orful trubulation—the most qualified o' genl'm'n yer know, sir, has trubulation come ontow 'em sometimes, an' for no fault o' tharn nuther. I kante bar to ask favors, sir, I want brung up ter it, but that ar mar' mus' be whirpt, and that little cuss that yer see thar onter the ground must be whirpt, tow, kaze, sir, 'twas the boy, fust off, an' the mar' next that fotch me inter this trubulation. I'm a genl'm'n, sir, an' my wife's a rael lady, I'll swear ter that, an' I'll whirp any genl'm'n that dar say the contrary. She smokes the best o' tobaccer, sir, intow her pipe, an' all Kanetuck kante perduce a finer player onter the fiddle than what she is; she'll geste play yer a tune, sir, that'll farly make yer har stan' on end, an that's a fac' by ——, sir!

"Got that ar swirch yit, sir? Mind, I tell yer, I propose to stan' a treat, when you've giv the licks! I'm a genl'm'n, sir, but yer see, I'm onfitted to do my own whirpin' as it orter be done, an as fur the cause that onfits me, uv your a genl'm'n, as yer close indercates yer tow be, yer wonte enquire nothink about it."

"I have no need to inquire my poor friend," says Mr. Lightwait, "but why should you ask me to whip, either your boy, or your horse? It seems to me they are both in trouble enough already."

"Go ter h—l with yer!" says the Kentuckian. "Kaze uv yer had the fus instinck uv a genl'm'n you'd know that the only satisfaction inter cases like this was the whirp, laid onter somebody!"

And with this, the shock head sunk down out of sight, the wise look changed to one of scorn.

By this time the two or three men who had been attracted by the disaster, were engaged in extricating the horse and

gathering up the plunder. Mr. Lightwait, therefore, gave his attention to the boy, designated by his parent as little cuss, and who was, perhaps, the pitifulest object of all. "Never mind my lad," he says, placing one hand on his shoulder, "your father isn't hurt, and we'll have you all right, directly. So, wipe up your eyes and be a man!"

Meanwhile the boy kept on sobbing and moaning, and being near him, Mr. Lightwait first became aware that his sobs and groans were interlarded with such profane exclamations as never came out of the head of a boy before, let us hope.

"It ain't dad 't I'm cryin' about," says he, "it's a h—I-fired sight wuss'n that—it's my dorg! he's got his leg broke! O, Bull, yer beautiful ole devil, you, how kin I guv yer up!"

He had the great clumsy head of the dog in his bosom, hugging it close and closer as he swayed himself to and fro, in his agony of grief.

Then he broke out afresh, turning his indignation upon Mr. Lightwait. "Dad indeed! yer mus' be a purty cuss, now—thar's a heap o' men kin whirp him, an half try, an thar's a heap o' better hunters tow, but as fur a bull pup like this! he kante be matched in all Kanetuck, nor no whars else! O, damnation! O, damnation, its tow tarnal bad!"

And this profanity was all through pure ignorance—he seemed to have no thought of any wickedness in the matter, but just to swear desperately as the natural way of expressing his heartfelt trouble.

"O, my dorg! O, dad's whiskey jug! its tow devilish bad—I swar, its tow devilish bad!"

"Bring your lantern this way, my friend," says Mr. Lightwait, motioning to one of the men who had by this time got the mare upon her feet.

"Bless my soul!" cries the man turning the light full upon the dog and boy, both squat upon the ground, and both whining together—"what's to pay here?"

"Heaven help us!" says Mr. Lightwait, involuntarily standing back.

He was startled thus, both by the human expression in the face of the dog, and the animal look of the boy—the latter was a round, clumsy creature, all the way of a size, like a cut-worm, and as brown as that.

Hair, face, clothes, legs and feet, hands and eyes were of one dull butternut color, and both skin and clothing were so rough and shaggy, withal, as to make him seem more like an image moulded of sand, than a living human being. His jacket and trowsers were so torn and diminished by shrinkage and wear, as to cover only half his body, and what with freckles and sunburn and small-pox, the skin differed so little from the clothing as to make all seem of a piece. The hands resembled claws, and the nails were broken and black, and some of them were grown into the finger-ends, causing various discolorations and protuberances that were anything but agreeable to look upon.

His ears were as brown as dead leaves, and looked dry and withered as if indeed they would rustle or snap off, if you were to touch them, and to make them the more conspicuous, they were ornamented with gold rings. The shoulders had rubbed themselves through the shirt, but showed only like patches of a sleeker cloth.

A rifle, as brown, and twice as long as himself, lay on the ground beside him, and crouching between his legs, lay his brindle dog, looking dreadfully like his own brother. His eyes had in them almost a human beseeching, the blood was oozing from his nose, and his crop ears and stump of a tail twitched constantly, as he whined in unison with his young master.

"What are you boo-hoo-in' for, you little rascal!" says the man with the lantern, pulling the lad by one of his leaf-like ears, and at the same time, giving the dog a kick with his boot — "this here dorg has got just as sound legs as you have, if he was a mind to stand onto 'em!"

"Tarnal thunder!" cries the boy, springing to his brown feet, and rubbing a brown fist in either brown eye, "don't yer tetch my dorg, uv yer know what's good for yer!"

The dog was on his feet too — his black jaws snapping and his back up, like a hyena.

"Don't yer bite him, ole feller!" says the boy, wrapping his hand all up in the loose skin about the dog's throat, and pulling him back; "don't yer bite — the cuss ain't wurth it!"

"Heaven help us!" Mr. Lightwait exclaimed again; and pausing only to glance at the old mare as she stood before the broken-down cart, her scrawny neck thrust far through

her straw-stuffed collar, her ears set back, and her warty legs quivering, passed sadly on, musing as he went to the effect that he would for the time to come be worthier of his high calling. While we have such heathen at our very doors, he said, we ought to cry aloud and spare not; and so with all his heart stirred, and with all his mind solemnized, he joined his class and set to work with such interest and zeal as he had scarcely manifested until that evening. How long his good resolution held, we shall presently see.

Of course, the occasion was one of great interest to all present, for when the pastor happened to have his heart in his work, he was always interesting, and somehow the forms and formation with which he had come in contact that night, had grated off some of the crust of his indifference and careless indolence just for the time.

So, as before stated, the occasion was interesting to all, unless indeed we should except Mrs. Fairfax, who had left Margaret sick at home, and who had failed to meet Doctor Allprice there as she had expected to do. She was a good deal disquieted in her mind, chiefly with reference to the doctor's absence, who since her over-tender demonstrations at Mrs. Whiteflock's, had been offish, and then too, she did not quite like to be seen walking home all alone — not that she was afraid — but how would it look!

Mr. Lightwait's reading of the Scriptures was something wonderful that night, they said who heard it; then he sang with all his soul, and when the concluding prayer was ended there was hardly a dry eye in the house. Everybody must shake hands with him and congratulate him on his eloquence and themselves on having so good a pastor. Those who dare make so bold shook both his hands; among these was Mrs. Fairfax.

"And how is our little Margaret?" he said, "I am pained not to see her here, but trust it is nothing serious that has kept her from among us."

Then Mrs. Fairfax said it was something serious — that Margaret had been ailing sadly ever since their drive to town that day — the heat, or the night air, or both together, had been too much for her, she was afraid. She knew that she was speaking falsely, and that it was Margaret's disappointment that had been too much for her, and the pastor knew it too, and his conscience smote him insomuch that he

said he would come very soon and see her. "And suppose you walk home with me to-night," says Mrs. Fairfax, seizing upon the happy suggestion, "it will do the dear child good to see you, and be a charitable act besides, for I am quite alone." So she turned her defeat into a triumph, and carried him off, he going all the more willingly, perhaps, from the twinges in his conscience.

Margaret was waiting at the open window, her face not freshly red like a rose, but deeply like an autumn flower, and her eyes flashing with strange fiery light.

"O, mother, guess what has happened," was her first eager exclamation of delight, as running forward she fell upon her mother's neck and kissed her in her joy.

"My little darling must not suffer even joy to stir her thus; we must be careful of her, if she will not be careful of herself." And putting one arm about her waist, Mr. Lightwait led her back to the sofa and seated himself beside her, retaining her hand, and caressing it softly. She was carried so far beyond him, just then, in the enthusiasm of her joy, that is not unlikely she did not even know he had her hand.

And here it may be said that Mr. Lightwait had not designed to see her, even when he had consented to accompany her mother home; he was fully resolved, in fact, to turn back from the gate, and to call upon her the following day, but seeing her bright face at the window he felt constrained to go forward and speak with her — he would not stop a moment — not a single moment — he had got the better of the tempter, and he would keep him where he was, behind him. So he came to the door and passed inside, and here he was on the sofa beside her, her white dress fluttering across his knees, and her little hand in his. He had forgotten all about the tempter, so much the worse for him.

The good news that made Margaret's cheeks so red was all about Samuel, of course. "O, don't you think he has got a rich relative come to take him out of that bad place he is in, and he is going to be rich too — and I don't know how rich! But he has had a great fortune left him by somebody that is dead, and I am so glad to think it should turn out so after all — ain't you glad, mother? And ain't you glad, Mr. Lightwait?" And she got her hand out of his

and clapped the two together, laughing and crying at once in a frenzy of delight.

"Pray, moderate your joy, my dear," says Mr. Lightwait. "I should, indeed, be heartily rejoiced if this were proven true, but there are so many wild rumors concerning the young man Samuel that one does not dare to credit even the good ones."

He spoke sadly, coldly, almost, his eyes fixed upon Margaret with that dark, dubious, intensified gaze that is sad to see.

She did not read the look aright; how could she read anything aright just then? but made haste to say, leaning quite upon his knee in her innocent gentleness, and looking up in his face, "O, but you may believe it, every word, because Mr. Hoops has been here, and he has seen the man that has come after Samuel, and he told me all about it, and the man is at the Eagle Hotel now; he came to-night on the coach, and all the village is talking of it. O, I wish it was to-morrow!"

"Humph!" says Mr. Lightwait, leaning his head thoughtfully on his hand; "are you quite sure about this, my child?"

"O, sure as I can be!" and she ran on, repeating what she had already said, over and over, with only slight variations of form.

Mrs. Fairfax expressed at first the most disdainful doubt, but the reported fortune outweighed every other consideration, and she presently turned a somersault, — an easy thing for her to do, — and came up quite on the side of Samuel. A nice young man he always was, and she had always said so, and if she had had her way the other day she would have contrived to see him somehow; she would be the first to do so now, that she would. As for his little derangement of mind, it was a misfortune, and that was the worst that could be said of it; some of the best people she ever knew had been subject to such fits. She would go immediately and write him a letter of congratulation; he should know that he had not been deserted by everybody. Would Brother Lightwait excuse her? just for a few minutes! She must write the letter while the mood held.

"O, do, dear mother! it is so good of you to think of it! and you will write to-morrow, or else go and see him yourself, won't you, dear Mr. Lightwait?"

"I will go, darling, if you wish it; I will do anything you wish, however painful to myself."

"But it can't possibly be painful to you to see another come to good fortune! Why, it makes me so happy, so very happy!"

"I would it did not make you quite so happy, my pretty one."

He drew her to him as he said this, and kissed her hair with a sort of reverent pity.

"And why, dear Mr. Lightwait, would you have me less happy?"

She was leaning on his knee as he had drawn her to him, and looking up in his face with tenderest entreaty.

He tightened the clasp of his arm upon her waist to a long, yearning pressure, slowly shook his head and sighed deeply.

Directly he said, "You called me dear just now; and if it had not been for Samuel's sake you said it, it would have been very sweet to hear."

Margaret drew away from him — "You do not answer my question?" she said.

"I do not dare, my child; I am already misunderstood, I perceive."

He was silent a moment, and then he said, "There is no creature loves me, and if I die no soul will pity me."

He said this in a tone of profoundest melancholy, and Margaret, half ashamed, gave him back her hand.

"I ventured," he said presently, "to open my heart to my sister Kate this very day, and she thrust it back upon itself just as you do now; when I would be true I am hindered."

"Heaven forbid that I should hinder you," Margaret said, her white fingers nervously, rather than tenderly, playing in the palm of his hand.

"And yet you, my darling, more than any one in the world, seal my lips." He had lifted her hand as he commenced speaking and pressed it against his mouth, so that every word he uttered was a kiss upon it.

"In what way? I do not in the least understand you!"

"And I fear you never will — never, my child, never."

"I certainly try with all my poor little skill, but it sometimes seems to me as if you took pleasure in making a mystery of yourself."

"I am unfortunately situated, and not wilfully mysterious, my dear, and if you only believed in me so that I could speak out plainly once for all, how rejoiced I should be!"

Then Margaret said she did believe in him, and entreated him to speak out once for all, but she did not believe in him, and was frightened at her own entreaty.

"Well, then, it is about Samuel I would speak."

"Very well, sir, go on."

Her tone and manner changed in a moment, and she sat upright, cold and white as a marble column.

Mr. Lightwait was quick to perceive this—"We will talk no more about him—not to-night," he said.

"And why not, pray?"

"Because, darling, I am not prepared to say, nor you to hear, what I must say if I spoke out fully and fairly all my fears; let me only say I have hopes as well as fears, but for the present prefer to suspend judgment, and keep silence. Are you satisfied at that?"

"No, not in the least—if you have anything to say against Samuel, say it out; if you have not, say that, and in either case I shall be satisfied."

"I begin to suspect that some of my fears, at any rate, are true, and more than this I must not, and dare not say—not, certainly, till you are in another frame of mind." Then he said they must pray and wait, and hope all they could.

Margaret was lost, bewildered, half angry, and her heart a little touched withal. She knew not how she felt, nor how she ought to feel. It seemed to her much as if her pastor held her death-warrant in his hand, and out of kindness to her could not read it; but at the same time there was underlying the tears and the gratitude, a distrust, and a troubling sense of displeasure. He read her heart: "I see I have said too much already," he whispered, and then for a time nothing was said by either of them, Margaret pulling the flower she wore in her belt all to pieces in her pretty agitation.

He took the hand and the poor broken flower together. "Silent so long, my darling?" he said, "do I deserve so terrible a reproof? Punish me some other way; pronounce some penance—there is nothing I will not do—go into

retreat, fast, flagellate myself, abstain from, or perform anything you shall impose; only speak!"

"I have nothing to say," replied Margaret, her brow all tied to a frown.

He covered his eyes with her hand. "That frown will distract me," he said, "and then you will have two mad lovers!" There was no lightness of tone to take from the meaning of the words, but all was intensely serious.

"Two mad lovers, indeed!" If you refer to Samuel, allow me to say I have not even one; he is no more mad than you are, sir; not so much!"

"It is the most charitable interpretation that can be put upon his conduct, certainly, but, be that as it may, your zeal in his behalf does your pure nature honor, and makes me love you all the more."

"You have mistaken your word," interposes Margaret, looking straight in his face.

"Pardon me, but you did not allow me to finish my sentence. I was just going on to say, if a pastor might be permitted to use such a word toward his child! Nay, do not deny me your hand, my little one; I am not, and could not be, presumptuous in any circumstances, but at the same time I desire most fervently to promote your highest temporal and eternal welfare. Ah, but I will keep your hand! it is my right. Why, my pretty one, I have twice your years on my shoulders, and they, surely, to say nothing of my sacred calling, should insure me against your distrust, even if they failed to inspire you with the confidence which I have taken for granted, and upon which I have unwarrantably drawn, it seems."

Still Margaret was silent, and he went on: "I am not blaming you, my dear; I could not blame you for anything; it is my misfortune, and not your fault, that I fail to make myself understood; but, even against your will, I shall persist in my efforts to ward off threatening evils, of whatever sort, to shield and guard you in all ways, trusting to time and the purity of my motives to place me before you in my own proper light."

The fingers of the hand he held twitched a little, but the hand was not withdrawn, and, holding it caressingly against his cheek, he went on: "Yes, my darling child, I shall still strive with all my might to win your confidence, your love,

and it is quite right that you should understand clearly upon what authority I seek these high privileges; let me say, then, once for all, that by my instalment here I am for the time being constituted your shepherd; an unworthy one, little Puritan, I own, but striving all the while to be worthier, and you are my innocent lamb, — pardon me if I say wayward lamb, — liable at any moment to stray from the true pasture. If, therefore, seeing the temptation you do not see, I should at any time gather you up in my bosom and bear you to safer and greener fields, I trust you will not think you have a right to rebel, and so thwart your own best interests."

Margaret hung her head in bashful and baffled confusion, and her pastor continued: "If I seem obtrusive in my guardianship, shall not the circumstances, the motive, plead my excuse? tell me, my child, my darling."

She only hung her head a little lower, and he continued: "My duty may sometimes oblige me to cross your will, in which case I know I shall seem to be a hard master, rather than a tender, generous friend, but if such case should arise, as is liable always, in relations like ours, let me now bespeak your forbearance, your pity; for, believe me, whatever cross may be imposed upon you, your part will not yet be so painful as mine; remember that I have set myself the task of a Christian minister, and that its duties will permit of no temporizing and no evasion." And all the while he was saying this he bent tenderly over her, caressing her hair, her neck, her cheek, and now and then passing her hand along his face, or against his mouth, and by this means forcing her as it were to caress him. His words had indeed been the words of a pastor, but his manner had been the manner of a lover.

Margaret was more and more bewildered and surprised by these strange contradictions. She was not accustomed to analyze motives or examine conduct very closely. She was not accustomed to think for herself at all, in fact, but to look to her superiors in years and in wisdom for guidance and instruction in all things; and she felt constrained now from the habit of her life, and against her instinct, to take him at his word, and accept his spiritual fatherhood without further question or demur. It was all owing to her stupidity and ignorance that she failed to understand him, and

to be comforted by his assurances of guardianship and protection.

His worldly wisdom and worldly ways were far above her simple wisdom and rustic ways. She thought, and she thought clearly, nothing more. She felt, however, that she was not comforted.

She managed to thank him some how. She hardly knew how, for his great condescension and kindness to her, and to express her unworthiness of such affectionate interest, and then she folded her hands away from him, in her lap, and waited in silence.

He understood very well that she waited, understood that he was dismissed, and that he owed it to her and to himself to go at once, and yet, knowing and feeling this, he did not go.

On the contrary, he drew her quite within his arms, and kissed her forehead, her cheek, her mouth, exclaiming as he did so, "I am so happy that my little pet is not displeased with the warmth of my interest." She drew herself up, looking at him with wonder and surprise.

"What, not understand me yet?" All his enthusiasm, all his spirit dropped into what seemed a surrender of hope, of everything.

"No!" said Margaret, braving her trembling heart, and fainting courage, "I certainly do not understand you, and I would rather you would not come to see me any more!" And with this, she hid her face in her hands, not daring to look at him.

He was not offended, nor disconcerted, nor in the slightest degree moved, so far as appeared. "Bless you, my child, bless you," he said, laying his hand on her head so lightly that he scarcely touched her. Then he said, "You are on the very verge of a precipice, my darling, trembling, tottering, going over!" Here he caught her in his arms again, "and how can I help gathering you to my bosom? O, Margaret, dear, dear Margaret, my very soul yearns over you, and yet I dare not speak."

Margaret felt too plainly that all this was somehow pointed at Samuel, and with more zeal than discretion she began talking of him again in a rambling, disjointed sort of fashion, ending with a declaration of belief in his virtues, and the general elevation and nobleness of his character, at

which her listener simply lifted his eyebrows. Thus irritated she went on to say that he was a martyr withal, but that she thanked Heaven that the time of his deliverance was at hand, and of the utter confusion of his enemies.

To this Mr. Lightwait replied quietly that a man might be a martyr in a bad cause, but that he hoped the young man in question might be proven as good as she believed him, but, begging her pardon, he had not quite her confidence.

Then he said, patting her cheek playfully, "but we will talk no more of this, my dear—not to-night."

"Let it be to-night, or never," cried Margaret, putting down her rising fears with all the strength of her will.

He still hesitated, and endeavored with coaxing and caressing to pacify her, or make it seem as if he thus endeavored, while in reality he fretted and worried her into angry and open defiance.

"You don't know anything," she said, "and dare not say anything to his prejudice."

There was a sort of fierceness in her defence of Samuel, which was the result, in part at least, of her own faithlessness to him—her anger had burned hot against him at one time, and time and time again she had seen visions and dreamed dreams that were not in accordance with the single truthfulness she exacted of him. For the hour she half despised herself and half despised him for whose sake she had been thus unfaithful, and yet, through all, his fascination lost none of its power—nay, it had gained power just in the proportion he had professed to resign hope.

He spoke now in the dangerous vein—"If I keep my good resolution and maintain the silence I imposed upon myself in the beginning of our conversation to-night," he said, "you must bear with me, my dear child. I know I have not much of your regard to lose, but reduce that little to the least, and I would not lose it for the world, as I fear I should, if I failed to hold my peace, even in the face of your challenge. You cannot know, my darling, how terrible your frown is to me—all the more terrible because I am not young enough nor worthy enough to hope for your favor. The youth of the heart outlives the youth of the form and face—more's the pity; I know I have nothing to love but the angels, nothing to hope this side of heaven, but heart and soul and all that is within me yearn on the

same ; though I have lost the power of pleasing, I have all the capacity of being pleased I ever had, and all the capacity of suffering too. Think as kindly as you can of me, then ; I shall take some comfort even in your pity."

His voice grew tremulous as he finished speaking, and he hid his eyes away from her, not uncovering them even when she played the time to a tender little tune with her finger on his knee. At last he said, smiling faintly, "What has your young life to do with my sad years and solemn reflections ? God forbid that I should darken a moment of your sunshine with my shadows. I was selfish to speak of them ; forgive me, my child ; I must and will disassociate you from my vain thoughts and go my way alone."

Now he is in a tenderer mood, thought Margaret, he will take back all that he has so darkly implied against Samuel, and stimulated by that hope, she once more made mention of him. "I am sorry you will not talk of him," she said. "To be sure, I don't care what is said against him ; that is, it could not change my opinion of him ; it might pain me, perhaps, but I am not afraid to hear the worst — not I !"

She said this just because of her fear, for how could her confidence in him be perfect when he had spoken to her the words he had, and when she had seen him lift his hand against the life of a fellow creature ! She was in that most tormenting experience that ever comes to woman — she loved without confidence. Nor was she much better off in her relation with her pastor ; she trusted him without confidence.

"And so you are sorry I will not talk of Samuel ?" he said, when at last her rambling defence was ended, and then he went on, more in soliloquy than as if speaking to her, "I dare say you are right, and that what is or might be said would only pain you, without at all altering the estimation in which you hold this young man ; therefore, on all accounts it were better to leave matters to time and chance — himself must either be justified past all doubt before long, and his accusers brought to confusion, or the contrary ; he trusted the former. And then he said no man was ever more loth to credit evil reports of a neighbor than he, still it was well to bear in mind that Samuel was a comparative stranger among them, that very little was really known of him, and that that little was certainly not all to

his credit, so that it would be the part of wisdom not to confide too much. If the attempt upon a life had been the effect of a temporary fit of insanity, he would be the first to receive back the poor fellow with open arms, although the life attempted had been his own.

Here Margaret interrupted him — “he never did attempt your life,” she said, “how could he have done so when you yourself acknowledged that you did not cross the meadow, at all? Your story does not hang together, at one time you make as though Samuel saw nothing, and must have been insane, and then again you talk as if he had almost murdered you.”

“What I believe is this,” says Mr. Lightwait; “he was insane, and his insanity conjured up something that he took to be me, therefore, his intent being murder, he is as guilty as though he had committed murder.”

Margaret was silent. He then said, he regretted to say, however, that there were those — persons, too, whose judgment was not to be gainsayed, who neither believed that he either was now or ever had been insane — that was, in the true sense. Then he said, “But you are making me do violence to my better judgment all the time; let us say no more.”

He had said just enough to arouse the uneasy anxiety of Margaret, and doubtless desired her to do just what she did — insist upon the bringing out of whatever he surmised, or had heard.

No, no, he must not say another word, for in spite of all, he had still strong hopes of Samuel. “We may yet see him a useful member of the community and of the church!” he said. “Heaven grant it!”

Directly he said he was sorry that Sister Whiteflock, the very stoutest of Samuel’s champions, had been obliged to admit an unfortunate liability on his part.

“O, Mr. Lightwait!” cried Margaret, catching his hand, as one in desperation catches at a straw. “What is it you would say?” There she stopped, her imploring eyes saying plainly, “do not speak it — I cannot hear it, after all.”

“What is it that is said? Well, darling, since you will hear, and since I know you are not afraid to hear, this is what is said, that the imputed insanity was nothing more nor less than a fit of delirium tremens.”

The fingers that had clutched his hands relaxed, the eager eyes lost their intense expression, and the whole attitude of the girl changed, as though half the life had gone out of her.

He must have seen this, and yet he went pitilessly on. "The sheep-shearers protest that on shearing day Samuel emptied more bottles than he sheared sheep."

At this Margaret burst out with: "The sheep-shearers, to be sure! and are you driven to a low set of fellows like that?"

He held up his white hand — "My impetuous darling," he said, "wait a little."

"No, I will not wait!" cried Margaret, "I hate all lies and liars."

"And does your own memory suggest no misgiving as to this paragon of yours?"

"No!" said Margaret, braving it through, nor once staggering.

"My child! my child!"

He said no more, but it was enough; the blood in her cheek whirled up to her brain and seemed to set it on fire, and she turned upon him all the more fiercely that she felt her strength to be nothing but weakness.

"Yes, I hate lies, and I hate insinuations," she said; "if one man has anything to say against another, let him say it manfully out, or if he is too much of a coward for that, let him keep his tongue from hints, that are, after all, the basest calumnies."

"There are those who are bold enough, my little impetuosity."

"Name them, if you can!"

"The sheep-shearers, if you will suffer me to name them again."

"Since you are driven so low, I suppose I must suffer it, but the accusations of such fellows will not weigh much with me, I forewarn you! Go on though."

"A low set of fellows, as you say, my dear, but was not this Samuel one of them?"

"No, — he happened to be among them, — he was not one of them."

"And did he happen to lift his hand against the life of his pastor too?"

“If he did lift his hand it was bravely done and not to strike in the back.”

This was a home thrust, but Mr. Lightwait kept his tone down to the same low level, as he went on, “You are fortunate in being able to regard their accusations so lightly, for they do say that when he had emptied more bottles than he had sheared sheep, he turned his back upon his sweetheart; but what he said of her thereafter is of such a nature that even your commands shall not force it out of me, though I would gladly obey you in all things.”

Margaret could not stand out against this; her own bitter remembrance went against her, with the rest, and throwing herself down upon the arm of the sofa, she hid her face from him, and cried as if her heart were fit to break.

Having bruised the heart, it was time for the binding to begin; besides, he had not perhaps intended to wound so deeply, and was, in some sort, repentant.

“Now Heaven forgive me, and you, too, my precious lamb,” he cried. “I did not intend to have this cruel thing wrenched out of me by any process. I was in the wrong, my poor, pretty one, altogether in the wrong; say you forgive me, for I cannot forgive myself. O, miserable man that I am!”

It happened to this man, sometimes, that his own impassioned utterances produced strange effects upon himself, and this proved a case in point; and as he caressed the low head with a hand that in its motions was almost reverential, the tears actually fell from his eyes till they lay glistening thick upon her hair like the dew upon some dark flower.

“You will never trust me more—never believe in me more,” he said, “and I am undone; I looked to you for counsel, and helpful wisdom; for light and strength. Surely it is not in the power of man to direct his steps, else he would not strike into the paths he does and dash his hopes to ruin. O, Margaret, dear Margaret! Look at me and show me that at least you do not hate me, for I am become hateful to myself. It is I that should lie prostrate, at your very feet, and with my mouth in the dust. I have insulted you in your sorrow, and made you justly my enemy. O, Margaret, that is what cuts me to the heart. I could bear to be degraded in the eyes of the world—even in my own eyes; but not in yours, Margaret!”

His voice was all broken to a tremulous whisper, and lifting her tenderly up, and looking so gently in her face with his tear-dimmed eyes, he went on, "Ah, you see now how weak I am, and what pitiful need I have of you. Nay, my darling, do not turn away, but for mercy's sake, if not for mine, smile once more and bid me live, for I am as one dead. Feel my hands; they are like ice. It is your coldness that freezes the blood in my veins, dear Margaret; but I do not blame you; no, no. I only blame myself."

He was so humble, so penitent, so pained and so ready to condemn himself, how should Margaret find it in her heart to condemn him; she was an artless, confiding child, and he a man of strong will and adroit management, and when he sought to dry her tears, she, like the rest of her sex, forgot that he had caused them.

He thanked her for the sweet confidence and confession she had given him through her unrestrained emotion; nothing in the world should have wrung from him the harsh words he had uttered, he said, if he had but guessed the extent and liveliness of her interest in Samuel; he saw it all now, and had really been dull to stupidity not to see it sooner. Why had not his sweet little pet come to her stupid old pastor and told him all about it? he had a great mind to box her ears for her obstinacy. And here he made a little pretence of boxing her ears that ended in a very lover-like caress. It was all in consequence of her lack of faith in him that he had come to deal so cruelly with the gentlest, tenderest, truest and most loving little heart in all the world. Would and could his darling child truly forgive him down to the very bottom of her innocent heart? No, he would not wrong her generous nature by asking the question. She would contradict all her sweet life to do otherwise.

For her sake he would suspend judgment; he had been quite too hasty, that he owned; indeed it was not unlikely that the sheep-shearers had taken a little too much themselves to permit of their rendering an honest verdict; he was ashamed that he had not allowed their gossip to go at its worth; but poor human nature was fallible, and his with the rest.

It was not rating Samuel out of all mercy that would further his own interest just then; that he understood well

enough from the first; and but for the news of his good fortune which pointed to his becoming a more formidable rival than ever, and but for the unfavorable comparison Margaret had drawn between them with reference to the open shot and the hitting in the back, he would certainly not have been betrayed into so deep a denunciation, and it is quite possible he would have spoken only in Samuel's praise. But what was done was done, and he must get over the mistake somehow, that was all.

It may have happened to you sometime, to see a man feeling his way along the ice before boldly venturing his entire weight; now backing, now zigzagging, and now cautiously advancing so as in the main to gain ground—thus this bishop's son felt his way; now inciting hope, now fear, now encouraging and now discouraging, with all the time a watchful eye upon his own safety, and just steadying Margaret up with praise enough to enable her to bear some new detraction.

At one time he said, "He is wonderfully handsome, this Samuel of ours; do you know I quite envy his manly breadth of chest, and those shapely legs upon which he stands so sturdily, to say nothing of the resolute cheerfulness he carries about with him! Why it is just like breathing the freshness of some primeval forest, to be near him. And then the shining glory of his beard! Woe's me, but I am continually shamed and fain to hide my womanish face in his presence."

Margaret was delighted and smiled; too bright a smile, it may be, to please him, for he made haste to say it was very sad to think of that symbol of perfect manhood all dim with dust and entangled with straws! he wished he had not the horrible picture in his mind—wished that his hopes did not so much enkindle his fears.

It was Margaret's turn to be displeased now. It seemed strange, she said, that he should return again and again to a picture that was so very horrible; and then she gathered her brows into a frown and looked out into the moonlight.

He apparently did not see the displeasure, but said, as he carefully wrapped the lace of the curtain about her shoulders to protect her from the evening air, that he would endeavor to conjure up a fairer picture, and so displace the

actual one. "We will imagine these pearly fingers a comb," he said, "to clear away the dust and disentangle the straws, and bring back the degenerate symbol to its original brightness."

And then he said the fairest maid of all the parish might, without doing any violence to her modesty, thus transform her pretty fingers, if only the favorable turn he hoped for came about.

And then he said there were some persons in the world so very good that we could not help wishing all the time that they were just a little better. Of his own personal knowledge he could say nothing against Samuel he was so glad that he knew nothing to say — in fact he had been and was still his debtor for some obliging favors, and he had known others to be so ; but, after all, generosity was not incompatible with great weaknesses of character, and, as Margaret knew, Samuel had had neither educational nor social aids to stay him up, and was therefore liable to be more importunately beset by the emissaries of Satan than the man who wore stronger armor.

Margaret only sighed, and he repeated that he knew nothing of his own personal observation or experience ; he simply suggested possibilities, and he must beseech his little darling, for the sake of her own peace, not to suffer possibilities or even probabilities to weigh too heavily upon her. "We will hope for the best," he said ; "ay, more, we will do for the best, and one of these days we may have our lost friend back among us, repentant, rebaptized in the faith, a shining pillar in the church, and the husband of one wife."

Then, patting Margaret's cheek, he went on with a forced playfulness : "Who knows but that I myself shall have the pleasure of performing the rite?" adding quickly with a half sigh, "the melancholy pleasure."

He remained looking at her so intently, so sadly, that she felt the necessity of saying something ; and so, in her innocence, and for the want of anything better to say, asked him if he disliked to perform the marriage ceremony.

"I should dislike to perform yours," he said, putting one arm across her neck under pretence of adjusting the lace which he had converted into a shawl : "you must never require it of me — promise me you never will, dear, dear

Margaret! I could not get through it — not without breaking down in utter confusion and disgrace.”

“Certainly not against your will,” she replied, rather coldly, the uneasy feeling that had been possessing her all along, more distinctly defining itself; and then she said she was sure she never expected to be married at all!

“Of course, Margaret, you will be married, sometime, and I shall see it, and shall try with what strength I may, to rejoice in it. It will be hard, but all my life has been hard. Pray for me, Margaret; pray that this wild, restless, yearning heart of mine may be stilled, stilled, stilled in some way! Forgive me, Margaret, forgive me, as you forgive the desire of the moth for the star — as you would forgive any vain, unreasoning, frantic aspiration.” He had wrought himself up into a fine frenzy, and as he bent in a supplicating attitude before her, his eyes liquid with that dew that is tenderer than tears; his hair, bathed in the moonlight, falling in wavy slips about his forehead and face; his hands clasped on her knees, and his sad, sweet smile just hovering on the edge of things unspoken, he made a glorious picture, to the mingled beauty, pathos and power of which Margaret was by no means insensible. Still she comprehended but imperfectly the full meaning of the man, nor is it any wonder, inasmuch as it is not likely that he fully and thoroughly comprehended himself. Having launched himself upon a tide of feeling it sometimes bore him beyond his own intent.

So there they were side by side, and face to face, alone, the yellow moonlight falling over them, and the soft silence of the hour, close upon midnight, consenting to whatever their hearts might conceive. The wind came to help along, and lifted the lace from the shoulder of the girl, and left both enveloped in it as in the folds of a great bridal veil. Then fell those silences upon the conversation which are so dangerously expressive, with interludes of sweet trifles that owe so much to sighs and glances, and that cannot in the faintest degree be represented in words. Was the air too chill? Should the moonlight be shaded a little? Was the scent of the flowers too powerful? Would, in short, that he could make for her another and a diviner world!

He said at last, coming from realms poetic to things real and immediate, that, although he had not believed her

when she said she never expected to be married, he had taken one thing for granted, and had been made very happy thereby; he had taken for granted that she was not promised to Samuel Dale!

Margaret was silent; in the first place she knew not how to understand him, nor what she ought to say, and in the second place she was half afraid of him, he was so much older, so much wiser than she; the things that were pertinent seemed to her impertinent; she was afraid, too, of outraging propriety, so she remained silent.

With Samuel Dale she had always experienced a sense of security and protection, of quiet comfort and satisfaction with herself, but how different was it with this bishop's son. Dazzled, disquieted, satisfied neither with herself nor with him. Why then did she surrender herself to his influence? it may be asked. Why does the moth fly into the flame of the candle? I only know that it does.

"You do not answer, my sweet Margaret. Was I wrong? And are you then promised to Samuel, after all?"

"And if I were," she said, abruptly, disengaging herself from the encircling arm, "what would it be to you?"

She had spoken without giving herself time to think, and then, abashed at herself, hid her face in her hands, the hot tears forcing their way through her fingers. Her heart was choking her, and with childish impetuosity she contradicted herself in her very thoughts — wished she could take back what she had said — wished she had said twice as much! wished he would go away — wished she had never seen him — wished she could rise up and crush him with the force of her moral superiority — and in the end sobbed on, and almost wished she had never been born.

Do not blame her too harshly, my wiser reader, nor mingle too much contempt with your pity. She was a child almost, remember, ignorant in all that you know, perhaps, not yet acquainted with her own womanhood, disconcerted by her own emotions, at the mercy of circumstances, as it were, being nearly as helpless in the present instance as the bird in the hand of the fowler. She did not understand herself, how then can you hope to understand her?

There are some persons in the world who cannot bear to see the ripened rose worn by another, even when, if the same flower were blooming in unadmired obscurity, they

would never think of reaching forth their hand to gather it. And Margaret might perhaps have walked in and out of church before the eyes of this man to the end of her life, if she had walked only by the side of her mother, but to see her eyes glancing away from him to rest on Samuel Dale, filled him with jealous and uneasy thoughts. That rough hand should never gather the fair rose at all events. He would fain keep those wandering eyes fixed upon himself; he would give direction to the soft fancies, his own being free; he would bestow himself away in her heart, leading her by the hand, the while. Some sort of ownership he must have, but all his desires would probably have been compassed by this sort of one-sided relation.

When he told Margaret, therefore, that it was a happiness to him to know that she was not promised to Samuel Dale, he did not misrepresent himself—it was a happiness, but that he wished her to be promised to himself did not of necessity follow.

“What would it be to me, my dear child?” he said, innocently repeating her question, “Why, am I not your shepherd, to be sure, and you the most precious of the lambs of my flock? How, then, if there be a wolf in the fold? shall it be as nothing to me?”

He took her cheeks between his palms and gazed tenderly upon her, adding seriously, “No, no, I am not so heartless a shepherd as that, I hope, but my simple duty would prompt me to keep you in green and pleasant pastures, to say nothing of higher and more Christian motives.”

He then said that he must express himself very inadequately, or he could not possibly be so often and so sadly misunderstood. A great deal more he said in the same strain, disparaging himself, but somehow causing Margaret to feel that she herself was all to blame.

“Our relation ought to be a very true and tender one,” he said, stroking her hair with grave and clerical kindness, “open, confidential, trustful, on your part, else I am only your shepherd in name, and utterly disabled from guiding you to any purpose. I felt, my child, that our relation was clearly defined and understood, at last, and was, to myself, justified in asking and expecting your confidence, and surely I had no thought of overstepping the bounds of my professional privilege.”

Margaret was overpowered with shame and confusion ; she felt instructed, corrected, humbled and cut to the heart, all at once, and made no effort either to control or conceal her emotions. Perhaps he understood her as nearly as she understood herself, more nearly, it may be, but it suited him just then to misinterpret her. He thanked her for the confession and the confidence given him by this sufferance of her heart to speak for itself, and proceeded to offer her sympathy and consolation from the false basis upon which he had placed her, repeating in substance much of what he had already said in the favor of Samuel.

"Cheer up, my poor child, cheer up, I will go and visit him again," he said, "and perhaps bring him home to you, if he is well enough ; at any rate, you may rely upon my doing all in my power for him."

Then he talked of the prospective fortune.

"This man that has come among us inquiring for him is a relative, you think." And then : "Well, perhaps with his influence and the money, — if there really be money, — we shall put our young man through college, yet. He would make a splendid fellow, with training." There was something in him beyond the common, that he had always said, but even though he had failed to see it heretofore, he must perforce see henceforth through Margaret's eyes.

He talked a good deal of her duty to her mother, who, he was sorry had felt obliged to deny herself to him that evening, but that she was acting most wisely he did not doubt ; her early congratulation would be a staff of strength in the hands of Samuel. Would Margaret convey to her, with his much love, the hope that the loss that he had sustained that evening would shortly be made up to him !

He then recommended certain religious books to Margaret, and intimated the hope that she would not forget in the brief frivolities of time, the solemn truths of eternity, concluding, with some allusion to Samuel and his hope concerning him. She, his child, his lamb, must be patient, trustful and obedient, for if she were otherwise he, being her shepherd, he added, playfully, should take leave to toss her over his shoulder and carry her whithersoever he would.

And with this charming finale he kissed her lightly on the forehead and went away.

As she lay on her pillow that night, watching the golden

piece of moonlight that at first fell across her hands and bosom and then so silently slipped down and down to her feet, and from the counterpane to the floor, and from the floor to the wall, farther and farther, till it vanished out of sight, she thought and thought, going over all the details of the evening, again and again ; but the interview was as little satisfactory in the review as in the experience. She could make nothing out of it, nor is it any wonder. It might have puzzled a wiser head than hers.

In vain she sought to fix as a central and settled fact what she most desired to believe. He had defined himself as her shepherd and spiritual guide, and had promised to be a true friend to her and to Samuel. Why should she not take him at his word? She could not answer this question. She said to herself that she would, and must, and did, and had ; that she could not ask more, and would not ask more than he had promised to be and was ; and so she wore the hours away, after the moonlight had slid out of her hands and out of her sight, knowing in her heart that, after all, and in spite of all, she did not and could not take him at his word. To add to her uncomfot she was not quite at one with herself. There had been times in her intercourse with this man when she had not been faithful to Samuel, out and out. True, she had rested herself on some sort of justification, and an impeachment of her truthfulness could not have been sustained, but all the while she accused herself, and was far from feeling justified in her poor justifications.

All that she had said that night in Samuel's behalf did not make amends to her conscience for all she had failed to say heretofore. He had never openly declared his love till their last wretched interview, be sure, and no faith had ever been pledged between them, still they were lovers, and a thousand declarations and pledges could not have fixed the fact more undeniably. Hearts, I imagine, have generally been exchanged before the possibility is hinted. He never told me he loved me, and never asked me to love him, and whatever I have thought or felt, said or done, I have been free to say and do. This was what she said in her poor justifications, but while she thus argued, she did not feel right with herself, nor guiltless toward him. His own generous confidence and unsuspecting honesty, together with the solemn sacredness with which she knew he believed in her,

seemed to impose upon her a stronger obligation than any promise she could have given. Besides, she knew the crime of which he stood accused had been attempted for her sake, and what will not woman forgive so long as she can say, "His treachery is truth to me."

Margaret's mother, meanwhile, was dreaming dreams, both awake and in sleep. What with "The Complete Letter-writer," frequent recourse to the dictionary, and by dint of using her mouth as well as her pen, she had indited an epistle to Samuel Dale that gave her pure satisfaction. This result was not achieved at the first effort; two unsuccessful ones had preceded it. In the first she made haste to congratulate him upon his happy inheritance, and to say that she had no doubts of his speedy and honorable release, that for her part she had never ceased to strive for it, nor to defend him from the first. Doubtless he would have friends enough now, but she trusted he in his great good sense would discriminate between old and tried friends and the shallow worldlings that were always dazzled by the glitter of gold. She told him she had written letter upon letter to him since the day he had been so wickedly forced from among them, but she feared, inasmuch as she had received no line in reply, that none of those ventures had ever come to his hand. She knew, indeed, they could not have done so, else his great, generous, truthful heart must have been touched by the unreserved pouring out of her own.

Not satisfied with writing, and not repelled by his silence, she had made constant efforts to communicate with him personally, and had even succeeded at one time in obtaining access to the asylum in which he was — odious prison, she characterized it. There she put in some descriptive touches that showed her, past cavil, to have been in the house. She acknowledged having treated him with seeming coldness, "But O, Samuel," she said, "my poor heart was beating with tenderness for you all the time."

Then she told him that she loved him to distraction from the first moment she had ever beheld him, and she proceeded to remind him of certain early evidences of the supposed fact. Did he not remember the flower she had kept so long, and how she had always worn the ribbon he had once admired?

Her apparent coldness had been all assumed in retaliation

for what seemed indifference on his part. "But O Samuel," she said, "I trust that seeming was not reality! The thought is a dagger to my bosom! I hoped that time, that pride, or at any rate that the devotion of other lovers, when I came to have them, as I have, would wean me from my foolish fondness for you; but all, all has been in vain, and this hour and every hour your image is the sweet torment of my life!"

This closing passage she quoted from one of Doctor Allprice's letters to herself, and thought it very effective.

It may be stated here that since the engagement the doctor's manner had undergone a remarkable change for the cooler, a change so little agreeable to the widow that she was resolved to cast about a little and see if she could not better her prospects. Marriage was in her estimation but a chance in a "grab-bag," and she determined to get her hand on something solid if possible.

On reading over this effusion it occurred to her that she could better it materially by affecting utter ignorance of his great inheritance — her letter would seem to fall into place more naturally as making one of the pretended series.

She also added some tenderer touches, quoting largely from the love letters of Doctor Allprice, and concluding with some lines from Mrs. Hemans in which she characterized him as her Guido of the fiery mien, and the dark eye of the Italian shore!

This, for the moment, she regarded as a complete triumph; but directly an emendation occurred to her — she would state accidentally that Margaret was the same as engaged to the bishop's son, and that, being as it were, thrown altogether upon herself by this event, she could not longer restrain her heart, but must give it expression somehow, and where should she go if not to her own true love, Samuel! With the completion of the third epistle, exhausted nature gave out, and she went straight to bed, and straight to sleep, as calmly, as self-satisfied, as though she had performed the highest moral duty. She had not only this one consummately happy achievement to reflect upon, her daughter and the bishop's son had been once more thrown together, and who knew what might come of it!

And so she fell asleep, neither seeing nor caring whether the moonlight slipped away from her hands, away from the

bed and the room, or whether it stayed and illuminated all with its glory, and her little ambitions went with her, and wrought themselves into her dreams.

And what of Katherine Lightwait? and did the moonshine gild her walls that night; or were they painted with a yet more dazzling splendor, or were they dark and gloomy and chill? Let us see!

John Hamlyn was no sooner out of the house than, betaking herself to her chamber, she locked the door, and falling on her knees, prayed for guidance and direction, but the words of her petition varied little from the accustomed formula, and the variations were all manufactured by her brain, her heart had nothing whatever to do with it; truth is, it was in such a state of strange and soft confusion as to be only in part conscious of the mechanical action of her mind.

She had told her brother that she knew herself, and when she arose from her knees, opening the blind facing the gate and the sunset lights, no doubt had yet come to her. As was her custom, she took up the Bible, and turned leaf after leaf with external serenity, not doubting even yet, though she received no meaning from the words she read, but that she knew herself perfectly.

Twenty years her heart had been held beneath her will as with an iron hand, and was it to slip from her control now at the mere hint, the shadowy suggestion of one who had been long ago repudiated, utterly and irretrievably displaced, forgotten, almost? Ah, no; what was it to her that the passing stranger reminded her in some way of the girl's foolish dream! She was a woman now, and had put away childish things, to be sure!

It did not occur to her that the hint, the shadow, had already had its influence; else why had she stayed away from the class; and why was she there alone with twenty years between her eyes and the page they rested upon? Why, indeed, was she saying, I have put away childish things! Would she, if she had known herself as thoroughly as she thought she did?

There come experiences to us sometimes that jostle us out of our shallow complacences, and leave us high and dry, to get acquainted with ourselves anew. One of these was coming—coming, and would soon meet Katherine Lightwait.

Now and then her heart, that did not speak often, spoke out, as she read, in spite of her, spoke out, and said—What if it should be he, Kate, after all!

And then she would answer boldly back. Well, if it should be he, what were that to me, I should like to know! I am what I am, and as I am I shall be till I die.

Then her heart would make a little sweet confusion, and the iron will would fancy it had it all its own way.

Every passing footstep startled her, nevertheless, and at length she changed her position so that she could no longer see the high road nor the door-yard gate; I will maintain my serenity, she says, against all odds, come what will. I would not surrender to the reality, let alone to the shadow! And so saying she changed her position, and in this much, did surrender. It became too dusky to admit of further reading, she said directly, and closed the book. She had read later many a time, and when she had clasped the clasps, she leaned her cheek upon her hand, a girlish trick, long disused, and fell musing upon her old lover, and in her thoughts she found herself calling him "Charley," again and again.

Twenty years were as nothing, and she was a girl again leaning down to him from her midnight window, his rose in her bosom, and the spell of his love, sweeter than the rose, all about her. The color of his glove, the ribbon that tied his hat, came back to her, and somehow, the things he had worn seemed not like the things worn by another. She could remember the very smell of the earth his hand had dugged one time when they sat together on the thyme-bed of the garden, every tone of expression, all the pretty pet names, she remembered them all; and as she counted the latter like beads, her heart trembled deliciously, and her pale cheek lighted itself out of long smothered fires.

A bird came fluttering into the bush beneath her window, and she started up like some guilty thing that is caught in its guilt, and with almost angry violence wrenched her thoughts from all tender associations.

He deserted us basely, she says to her heart, when and while our confidence was at the strongest and our love at the ripest and the best. And shall we sit and muse thus tenderly even after all these years, when in truth he never

deserved our tenderness at all! Nay, but I am ashamed of it all!

Thus she yielded another point, and took her heart into confidence, but even yet, she was not in the least aware of the yielding; on the contrary, she still fancied herself firm, through and through.

Suppose it was really he, and suppose he should have the audacity to come to me! And with eager haste she rang for her maid — rang energetically, furiously, almost.

"If any one should call for me to-night, especially if a stranger should call, you must excuse me, my good Fanny," she says. "I have a headache, and am not well."

The maid stared; she had never addressed her in that soft tone before, and never in all her days before said my good Fanny. What could her mistress mean? She must be sick indeed. "Can I do anything for you, ma'am?" "No." And then she gave the required promise, and went away; and when she was gone the mistress fell musing again. If it were he, and if by any chance — Heaven avert it! — I should be obliged to see him, why then, what should I say?

And then she told herself she had imagined a vain thing, that no such chance would, or could, or should intervene, and then she said, even if it should, need I premeditate my behavior? I trust my self-possession is not at the option of so poor a creature! And having arrived at this conclusion, she at once proceeded to compose a little speech that was quite as cold and polished as a piece of ice. As for her personal bearing, it should be equably, majestically indifferent. She would not betray by an emotion that he was anything to her, and indeed he was not. She knew herself, she hoped; she was old enough to know, and she had seen women make fools of themselves in love, often enough to teach her a lesson.

And all this time the test, as to whether or not she knew herself so well, was coming closer and closer.

It was just in the last edge of that sweet time that is neither night nor day, the time when light and darkness embrace and mingle into one, that the great test really met her face to face. The lifting of the gate-latch startled her like the battering of some besieging engine, and the tread along the gravelled path thrilled her as it were the crushing

of a ploughshare along the graves of her dead. It was just the old step; bold, buoyant, confident, nothing timid, or hesitant, or asking about it.

She dare not stir; she almost held her breath, listening and waiting. Directly comes Fanny. "An old friend, he did not send his name," she says.

"But didn't I tell you, Fanny, I would not see any one? How could you?"

"Beg your pardon, ma'am, but you only said you would not see a stranger, and I thought be sure you would see an old friend."

"Go back and say, Miss Lightwait very much regrets it, but she is not able to see any one to-night."

The maid hesitates, as though she would fain say something in the stranger's interest, but at last leaves the room with the air of one dreadfully imposed upon.

Presently she comes again—this time with a card. Charles P. Gayfeather. "He said you would certainly see him, ma'am, if you knew," says the maid.

"It is quite impossible. Say so," simply, replies the mistress, and she tosses the card from her, compresses her lips and settles back in her easy chair, anything but easy. She had betrayed to her maid that she was discomposed. and this added to her previous discomposure.

A great pressure was on her brain and blindness in her eyes; she seemed to be sinking, and to experience the sensations of a drowning person.

Still she said it was all the shock of a surprise, a momentary weakness that she would get the better of presently. Of course she would, she knew herself, and could trust herself, in spite of this weakness of the flesh. So she arose and walked to the window, but somehow there was a dizziness, a trembling of the knees, and she tottered back and sank down in her chair again.

Her heart gave a great leap with the light little knock that fell upon the door; she was so sick and nervous, she said, with everything else. This time the maid brought a note, written in pencil on the blank half page of one of Katherine's own letters to "Charley."

"Do not deny yourself to me any longer," it said, "dear Kate, sweet Kate—always dear and sweet Kate—though whatever else you do, for Heaven's sake send me back this

letter. But I pray you to send it with your leave for me to come to you once, if only this once, dear Kate; and so praying, I wait my doom of life or death."

The letter was worn and torn as if it had been read a thousand times, the paper yellow as old ivory, and the ink faded to a dull brown; it came back to Katherine like the very ghost of herself, and ere she had half read the pencilled note, the dizzy blindness became black darkness, the sinking, deathly sickening, and with a helpless little moan she sank to the ground, fainting dead away.

"O, my poor mistress! O, Lord have mercy!" cries the maid, and with her arms above her head, she runs screaming for help.

A moment, and "Charley" has his Kate in his arms!

CHAPTER XVII.

MISS P. GOKE GETS HERSELF REPRESENTED.



HERE were lively times in Bloomington; the show had been in successful operation for four days, bringing some accession of business or pleasure to everybody, and now the afternoon of the fifth day was come, and this evening was to see the last of the great show. Miss P. Goke had disposed of all her superfluous stock, so many ribbons, and feathers, and flowers, had been in demand by the young ladies; and all her premises were pervaded by a strong smell of brimstone caused by the process of bleaching old straw and Leghorn bonnets that was going on in her underground department. Miss Martha Whiteflock had been her most liberal patroness, perhaps; she had purchased two new bonnets, at once; an unheard-of extravagance, and causing not a little gossip among the ladies whose old straws and Leghorns were in the sulphurous state of renovation.

“And you say, Miss Goke,” says the butcher’s wife, “that one of ’em was quite a bride’s bonnet?”

“Quite a bride’s bonnet, indeed!” responds Miss Goke; “it was a bride’s bonnet out and out, veil and all!”

“What *can* she want of it?” says the butcher’s wife; “not to wear to the show, surely, and that just over, too?”

“But then there is the other, as plain as a pipe stem. I should like to know what she wants of that!” says Miss P. Goke.

“And by all accounts bonnets ain’t the only extravagance she’s been guilty of,” says the butcher’s wife. “She’s been buying dresses and things at all the stores in town, and what’s more, she’s run her father in debt at a dreadful rate, they say.”

“Is it possible?” says Miss Goke; and then she says, “Poor Peter Whiteflock! Sometimes I am a’most sorry for him; pity he’s so big and strange looking, isn’t it?”

“Why, yes, it does seem a’most a pity,” says the butcher’s wife; and bless my stars, but there he goes now in his new carriage! Just look at him, Miss Goke, how he is fixed up!”

Then the two women got their heads together behind the lace curtain, and discussed Peter’s costume, from neck-tie to shoe-tie, wondering how it came about that he was dressed so carefully, and whether Mrs. Whiteflock had anything to do about it, concluding very wisely that it was just one of Peter’s freaks, and that *Madam Whiteflock* had nothing whatever to do about it.

Then the new carriage was discussed, and disparaged by both the women. “It’s too big for one horse, and isn’t big enough for two,” says Miss Goke.

“It’s too high and narrer, and I don’t like the color of it,” says the butcher’s wife.

“It’s too low and too wide, I think,” says Miss P. Goke; “and the dear knows *Madam Whiteflock* is welcome to it for all of me; I don’t envy her her fine carriage nor her fine husband, neither!” And she jerked the needle through the ribbon she was knotting with great energy.

“Nor I, neither,” says the butcher’s wife; “and I’d just as soon ride in my husband’s cart any day, as in that queer-looking thing! And then she cries, “He’s stopping at the grocer’s don’t you think! What can he be going there for? Just see him, Miss Goke — gloves, as you live! and a white

handkerchief stuck in his pocket! What under the sun is going to happen?"

When Peter has fastened the rein at the hitching-post, he gently caresses the neck and ears of the mare he is driving, and as he stands thus, his face full toward the women, they cannot help admitting that he is pale, and that, to all appearance, he is sick, but at the same time, the new carriage and all the fine things at home rise up against him, and they cannot admit that he is sick in verity, or if he is, they say by their manner, they have not much sympathy for him. Rich people cannot suffer much in their estimation, or if they do, why they get as good as they deserve, at any rate.

They talk of the show, of the handsome showmen, of all the strange beasts and birds, of the delightful monkeys, of the wonderful brass band that accompanies the show, and of how dull and lonesome it will be when the great tent is broken up, and the monster elephant led away under his canvas cover.

"But, dear me!" cries Miss Goke, throwing down her ribbons all at once, there is the twelve o'clock bell, and I haven't got my tea-kettle on, and Mr. Hoops will be in for his dinner in a few minutes!"

"Well, of all things, how time does fly when a body's interested," says the butcher's wife; "I ought to have been at home by rights an hour ago; *he's* always cross if he comes in and doesn't find me there!" And then she tells Miss Goke never to marry if she knows when she is well off, adding quickly, lest she may have said too much, "That is, Miss Goke, not unless you get just such another good man as I have got!" And with a playful smile that was meant to gild all her married life with its sunshine, she went away.

Miss Goke's white fancy apron had been superseded by one of coarse checked stuff, her dress cap was hung on the knob of the door, instead of the knob of her neck, and she was down on her knees, blowing at some black embers under a pot of potatoes, when there fell a little shuffling at the door, and Mr. Hoops, with his apron of bed-ticking full of cooper's shavings, came in. He had never felt upon so much of an equality with his hostess in his life; the little lace cap with its gay flowers, and the little fancy apron with its tiny pockets and floating sash had seemed to put leagues between them, hitherto, but Miss Goke proper was by no means so

formidable, and down came the cooper to his knees beside her before she had time to rise, if, indeed, she had not been too much stupefied to rise at all. Stupefied with fright at being thus discovered, for she was one of those women who contrive to seem always at leisure, and to make it appear that any real work is something to which they now and then betake themselves for recreation and pastime.

"O dear! O dear!" she cries in her confusion, her face blazing twice as red as her fire.

"Don't be vexed with yourself," says the cooper, coaxingly; "you never looked half so purty to me as what you do this minute;" and then abashed at himself he began to talk of the shavings he had brought, and of how soon they would fetch up the fire.

He had never said so much before, and Miss Goke took heart, in spite of her diminished attractions. "I was confused, Mr. Hoops," she said, "at being caught so, but if I only look well in your eyes, why it's all right." She spoke with a certain playfulness that permitted her words to pass for earnest or for jest, just as her listener chose to interpret. Mr. Hoops would have chosen to interpret them in earnest, but dare not. "I have wanity enough," says he, "but I haven't quite the wanity to believe you." And then he gets some more shavings under the pot, and blows upon them with all his might.

"I was perfectly in earnest," says Miss Goke, and this time she was in earnest. By this time there was a little blue blaze under the potato pot, and both continued for a minute feeding it in silence from the red oak shavings in the cooper's apron.

"What a nice fire you have made for me!" says Miss Goke, at last driven to say something.

"Shavings does make a nice fire for some things," says the cooper; "a wery nice fire for some things."

"For boiling vegetables, for instance," says Miss Goke.

"Yes, that's what I had into my mind; for bilin' wogutables, shavin's is splendid for that."

"Ah, to be sure, splendid, really."

"And you bile a good many, agreeable to my observation, Miss Goke?"

"Yes, I am fond of vegetables, especially of potatoes, when they are good and mealy."

"So am I fond of vegetables, 'specially of potatoes, when they're good and mealy, as you wisely say, Miss Goke."

"And your shavings are just the thing; only see how the lid dances on the pot!"

"Miss Goke," says the cooper, with great seriousness, "I'll wenter to say the heart in my bosom is dancin' wilder than what that pot-led is."

"Indeed, Mr Hoops! Why so, if I may venture to inquire?"

"Wenter to inquire! I should say you might wenter to inquire, for it was a matter that involves the happiness o' your whole life, maybe, that I was rewolvin' into my mind."

"Is it possible, Mr. Hoops? What could it have been? About the potatoes?"

"Yes, Miss Goke, it was about the potatoes! how you do see into things!"

"I think, sir, we have said enough on that subject," says Miss Goke, disappointed, and making a movement to rise.

The cooper caught her hand and detained her. "Yes, dear one," says he, "I was thinkin' about potaters, and rewolvin' the subject into my mind. The pint I made was this: We both like vegetables, and we agree that oak shavin's is nice fuel to bile 'em with, especially potaters; now the pint I make is this: Bein' agreed in our likin' for potaters, and furthermore bein' agreed as to the best method of bilin' the same, isn't it reasonable to suppose that we was intended to be jined by the bindin' wow! You've got wirtues, Miss Goke, and you've got a trade, but your wirtues would become wisibler a thousand times, if they was reflected through the bindin' wow, and your trade would be elewated into a wocation by the same instermentality, for it can't be controverted but what the bindin' wow, in pint of respectability, is an adwantage."

He paused, and made a little dab at the ear of Miss Goke, with a long, curled shaving — probably by way of soliciting her reply. But she remained silent, and he went on: "Aside from the adwantages of the wow, we two seem clear, into my mind, to have been diwinely sot apart to come together, the same being virtually proclaimed through our agreement about vegetables — more especially potaters."

Here he made another pause, and another dab with the shaving upon the innocent ear of Miss P. Goke. She caught

the shaving in her hand, and fell to knotting it as though it had been a ribbon, but said nothing, and again the wooer proceeded: "My observation verifies the assertion, and I have the confidence into me, therefore, to assert that no married couple into the whole universe agree onto more pints than we agree onto — the same bein' two — first, that mealy potatoes is good, and second, that shavin's is the thing to bile 'em with. And now Miss Goke, in view of the advantages, and in view of the pints of agreement, do you wote for the bindin' wow, or do you wote agin' the bindin' wow?"

Perhaps it was in some sort a bashful art, that Miss Goke still silently knotted the shaving, and gazed at the flames now curling round and round the black and bulging pot as it hung from the crane by a variety of hooks and trammels.

But whether it were a bashful art, or whether it were maidenly confusion — for the proposal was somewhat abrupt, it must be admitted — that kept the lady silent, the silence was not interpreted to her advantage.

"I see what prewents your reply," says the cooper; "I have so involved my pints that you, bein' a woman, don't comprehend 'em; I was very thoughtless."

And then he said, with gracious condescension, "What I meant by bindin' wow was marriage, and when I asked for your wote it was the same as askin' you to say yes or no, and here I may explain that askin' for a woman's wote at all onto such a question is just a compliment without the shadow of meanin' into it, for it's always knowed aforehand that the answer will be yes." Then he told her that if she felt too much awe-struck by the proposal to speak just then, her answer would be took for granted!

"O the insufferable vanity!" cries Miss Goke, but she cries it only mentally; what she suffers her wooer to hear is another thing. She is not very wise, but she is wise enough to know her superiority to him — wise enough to know that thirty-two and eighteen are not all one, and that probably wooers will not be so plenty hereafter as blackberries. She knows, too, that the cooper has not overestimated the accession of popularity and respectability that would accrue to her through marriage. She sees in her mind's eye, Mrs. P. G. Hoops shining down from her sign-board in the street, and realizes the whole effect in a moment, and she answers,

seeming to look up to him, while in reality she looks down upon him, that she feels flattered, honored indeed, by his proposal, but that it is so sudden, so unexpected, she must beg for time to consider. Then, too, she is so unworthy of his preference! and she intimates that if she had had all the wide world from which to choose a husband she must inevitably have selected the simpleton before her.

As they ate their dinner he told her about the well-bucket he had been making for Mrs. Fairfax. "It has been a wery troublesome job," says he, "and I never would have undertook it of my own free will; it's out of my line o' business, and has cost more than it'll come to; and if you say so we'll just keep the bucket for ourselves, and I'll set one o' my hands to make another for the widow — one that shan't cost more than it comes to."

Miss Goke had a secret feeling that this would not be dealing quite honorably toward Mrs. Fairfax, and she gently intimated her impression, saying that her own well-bucket would answer very well for the present. Then she corrected herself and said *our* bucket, smiling deferentially all the time.

"No matter whether we need the bucket or not," says the cooper with an air of great superiority; "we've got the advantage of her, and we'll keep it." And he waved his hand across the potato dish as if he would say, the subject is dismissed, and the matter settled, now and forever. "You women," says he, "have wery strange notions o' business!"

"Very true," says Miss Goke, still smiling deferentially, and she said nothing more, except to inquire what was the price of the new well-bucket.

"I promised it for three dollars and a half," says the cooper, "but what does that avail; she'll never get it. I've got the advantage."

Still Miss Goke smiled, and if the cooper could have seen it, there was a little tinge of sarcasm in her smile. All the sermons and all the lectures she had ever heard had gone to show that the weaker sex were represented by the stronger; the wives and sisters by the husbands and brothers. Is this a sample of the representation? she was saying to herself, but she said nothing aloud; she only lifted her eyebrows as she smiled.

"The bargain was all werbal, and it gives us the advantage," says the cooper. They had risen from the table now,

and as he said this he took Miss Goke round the waist, and drew her toward him, chuckling.

She felt degraded by that embrace, nevertheless she permitted it — suffered it, we might say, and when she found herself alone she almost regretted that she was no longer free to say of her potato-pot *mine*, and not *ours*. For comfort, she must put herself outside herself; this she did, and and still found that Mrs. P. G. Hoops looked so much better on the sign! It was settled for her then by the pressure and force of external things that she should henceforth have a protector and representative in the world!

In her show-case there hung a beautiful new bonnet just completed for Mrs. Fairfax, and pinned to one of the broad ribbon strings was a neat little note — the cost of the bonnet in detail, and the price in full. She unpinned this note and laid it on the coals that had boiled the potatoes; then she sat down and made up a new bill, and if one could have looked over her shoulder it would have been seen that in the last account a deduction was made to just the amount of three dollars and fifty cents, so she squared the matter with her conscience and so she entered upon her representation.

That morning at breakfast Mrs. Whiteflock had said to her husband — “Dear Peter we have been following the Doctor’s advice long enough; you have kept in your darkened room and swallowed pills, and been blistered and bled, and what not; now suppose we change our method, and you go abroad and see your friends and take the air; there is the show, shouldn’t you like to go and see that, and take me, Peter?”

She spoke with cheerful animation, laying the daintiest bits of toast and broiled chicken on his plate, the while.

“No, good woman,” says Peter, smiling faintly; he never called her wife, nor Martha, even, now-a-days; “No, I don’t feel like goin’ much. I like to be alone mostly — that is, what’s called alone, but I ain’t alone, no time. I have them with me that’s company enough.”

“But just to please me, Peter,” pleads the wife. “You are not getting well so fast as I should like to have you, though the doctor keeps saying you are.”

“Does he?” says Peter: “well you just take him at his word, and don’t inquire no further. I’m satisfied.”

“But I am not satisfied. Why, Peter, your forehead

looks like yellow glass; and as though I could see my face in it, if I tried, and the veins in your hands and along your neck stand up like cords, and you are really no stronger than I am, big as you are; it's no use for the doctor to tell me you're better!"

"Do I really look so bad?" says Peter, and leaving the table, he went into the drawing-room and surveyed himself in the huge mirror that covered half the side of the wall there. He turned his head this way and that, and felt of the great veins along his temples and neck; then he pushed back his sleeve and looked at his arm, lean, and limber, and blue now, and as though it had been bruised and the life were slowly withering out of it. He nodded to himself in the glass and smiled as though he would say, it is all going very well, better even than I had hoped.

"Isn't it just as I told you?" says Mrs. Whiteflock, who had followed him. "O my dear Peter, you don't know how anxious I am about you."

"Anxious about me?" says Peter, his eyes staring wide with amazement.

"Why, yes, Peter, and why shouldn't I be when you are so sick?"

"Why shouldn't you be! Why should you be? I say, that's the question."

"How can you say so, Peter?"

"I could always say things which was true, and I never could say things which wasn't true," says Peter, and then he says he is sorry if he has said anything which is not right, but that he could not think at first it was possible she was in airnest in the concern about him which she expressed it. And then seeing how really distressed the poor woman looked, he went on — "Don't be troubled about me. I ain't worth it, but I seem to have been fated to be in your light, though it can't be long now, so cheer up and I'll try to slip off as quietly, and with makin' as little trouble as I can."

"Then you'll really go?" says the wife not in the least understanding his allusion about slipping off quietly, but supposing he only refers to her suggestion as to his going abroad.

Peter saw her mistake, but only smiled at it, and she went on, all enthusiasm, "I'll order the new carriage fetched to the door and you shall drive! The Doctor said nothing

against your driving, you remember, he simply opposed your long walks. And there's your new clothes—you'll wear them to be sure!"

"I'll wear 'em if you wish," says Peter, "but I'd rather keep 'em agin a time which I've got in my mind."

"O you foolish man!" cries Mrs. Whiteflock, affecting a playfulness she does not feel, and she goes close to him, and with her hand across his neck talks of the time when he shall be quite well again, and of the execution of a thousand plans of happiness she has been dreaming of. Peter listened and smiled assent, but it was plain to be seen that he heard as from a great distance, and that he was not affected by what he heard—listened as the wiser mother listens to the prattle of her child when it talks of having its playthings about it twenty years hence. He opposed her no more, however.

"I will do as you wish, my good woman," he said, "I have done you wrong enough in time past, and now I must make what amends I can."

"Done me wrong, Peter! I should like to know when!"

Then she ran away, and when she came to him again her cheek was aglow with wifely pleasure and pride. "Just see," she says, "what I have been doing;" and she held up before him the waistcoat she had embroidered, and the fine linen she had stitched with her own hand.

"If this had only happened before!" says Peter, and a shadow passed across his face, and a tremor came to his lip, just for an instant, and then it was gone and he smiled again. "Put 'em away, good woman," says he; "put 'em away in the drawer. I'd rather keep 'em agin the time which I have in my mind!"

"But you'll go abroad, any how?" says the wife, still ignoring the sad intimation. "You'll drive about the village, and so come round and call upon Miss Kate Lightwait; and, by the way, her old beau has come back to her, and there is no knowing that you will ever have another opportunity of calling upon Miss Lightwait."

"I'll go," says Peter, "as it seems to be the wish that you wish 't, and I'll wear my new clothes, though I prefer to keep 'em agin the time that I have in my mind, but there is one thing that I am not willing for to do, the same being to ride in the new carriage; I shouldn't feel right in it,

and besides I don't regard it as belonging to me. I bought it for you to foller me in when I go to my last home, — and I might say to my home, leaving out the last, — and then for him and you afterwardst."

"O dear Peter, it is too true that you have never had a home, and I am all to blame for it. I own it in shame and humiliation! and the Lord have mercy on me!"

"Don't blame yourself, good woman," says Peter; "remember it was the circumstances in which you was placed, that made all that wasn't right, and when you come clean down to the sin original, it all rests onto me. I married you when I knowed you didn't love me, and I knowed in my heart that such a marriage could only be a marriage to some extent, and never a marriage in full, try as I would to deceive myself. Once I asked Sam about it, but there was no need o' asking Sam, the Sam in my own bosom had told me beforehand."

The wife was sitting at his feet now and clasping his knees. "If I didn't love you when I married you," she says, "I love you now: all your years of silent endurance, all the good you have given back for my evil, all your meekness under reproach, all your patience, and pious forbearance more especially with reference to" —

She stopped, and hid her face upon his knees, but in a moment lifting her eyes to him, went on: "No, I will spare myself nothing; I will speak his name, hateful as it is. I was going to say more especially with reference to Luther Larky, and to all my foolish fondness for him. O how blind, how wicked I have been!"

"Don't say that," says Peter, "It hurts me to hear it, and I've got nothing laid up agin you and never had. The fault was mine, first and last. I have tried to do what I could by keeping out o' your way, and being as though I wasn't in the world; I couldn't go out of it voluntarily because it's agin the Scriptor, but things being as things was, my continuance in the body was undesirable, and I've prayed all the while for an abiding place that was more to my mind, and I may say more to the mind of you and Luther, and at last the prayer has been answered. And when I am gone, I shall have done the best I could toward making amends for the great wrong done you."

"What wrong, pray?"

"The wrong of marrying you. That was a wrong which there is no wrong like it; even our children haven't risen up to call us blessed, but the wrong done to them was more than they can do to us, for as things was original it wasn't in the nature of 'em that they could be better than they are. I don't blame them, nor you, nor him. I only blame myself, but I give myself up long ago, and sentence was pronounced, and I've got nothing to say in my defence."

Peter had not intended it, but every word he had spoken cut the poor wife to the heart; the darkness that was settling between them served as a background upon which all her sins, both of omission and commission, painted themselves in hideous shapes and colors.

She was leaning across his knees, clasping his hands to her bosom, and as she thus clasped and caressed them, the burning, blistering tears fell upon them thick and fast. At last she spoke, "O my good husband," she says, "I have been to you no true wife, and in shame and penitence I lie here before you and ask your forgiveness."

"My good woman, I have nothing to forgive," interposed Peter; "I sowed to the wind and I reaped the whirlwind, that is all."

"O, for mercy's sake," she cries, "call me Martha—call me wife. I cannot bear to be put so far away from you, though I know I deserve it."

"Then I'll call you Martha," says Peter, "that other word seems like trying to speak a language that was foreign to me, and it's too late to learn a language that is strange."

"O if there were but some great sacrifice, some sudden and mighty throe by which I could make everything right," responds the wife, "what would I not do! But when we have lived into a wrong, there is only one way, and that is to live out and up into the right. This, with God's help, I mean to do. O, my dear husband, do not leave me now, just as I begin to be worthy of you, just as I begin to understand how you have practised religion, while I have only professed it."

Then she goes on to say how he has done nothing but good to her through all the years that she has been spitefully using and abusing him; how he gave her a beautiful home, and then contented himself with the least and meanest portion; how he spread for her the feast, and himself fed upon the crumbs that fell from her table.

"I have not meant to be wicked," she says, "but it is all one. I have been thoughtless, vain, selfish, frivolous and foolish. In my carelessness and ingratitude I have taken my blessings as matters of course, and the result is, moth and rust have crept over my treasures, and I am left among them desolate, my heart empty, and my soul a prey to remorse. The viper I nursed in my bosom has stung me, and though I have at last shaken it off and set my foot upon its head, the poison is in all my veins, and in my sufferings I have neither the true love nor the true pity of any living soul."

"O, Martha," says Peter, "if this had only happened afore!" And then seeing how sadly stricken she was, he bent over her and as he smoothed the hair that was all fallen and disordered, assumed the tone of cheerfulness and hope. "Maybe, after all," says he, "the event that I have had in my mind may not be so near as I thought. Cheer up, Martha, darling, for when you ain't a-smiling, it appears like as if the sun was put out."

She lifted her face from his knee all suffused with tearful blushes; he had called her darling, he had laid his hand lovingly upon her hair, and their courtship was really begun.

The reader may smile if he choose, but if there be anything to cause a smile in the woman's recognition of the honest simplicity and sweetness of the man's soul, albeit it was so clumsily housed, and albeit his hand, and his heart, and his tongue had played him false so long in their failure to represent his better self; if he see aught to smile at in all this, I say, let him smile; I fail to perceive in it any matter for mirthfulness.

An hour after this, Peter, dressed in all his best rode away in the new carriage. True, the embroidered waistcoat had been found a world too wide, but Martha had tied it in and in, until at last a beautiful fit had been achieved, so she said. She had combed his hair, growing thin and gray now, twisting the faded slips to half curls along the hollow temples. She had buttoned the gloves, and then, remembering his love of finery, she had lifted herself on tiptoe and stuck her own diamond pin in the neatly folded cravat, and as she watched him ride away from the porch-side, her heart was all astir with tender pride.

Old Posey had been groomed to her sleekest, and with a

green spray at her bridle, tossed up her head and trotted off almost gayly, though if one had observed closely it would have been seen that her legs were a little stiff, that one eye was white, and that her neck was considerably awry.

None of these defects showed to the casual observer, however, nor did the glossy, yellow forehead of Peter look so wan and so ghostly beneath the broad brim of the fine beaver, as it would otherwise have done.

Probably, if Miss P. Goke and her friend, the butcher's wife, could have seen through the shows of things to the facts, as they peered out upon him from the window that day, the envious comment would never have been spoken, and the feeling that prompted it would have been changed to pity and love. Peter, as before said, drew up at the grocery store, though, if he had known it, there was no real errand to take him there, the wife in her wifely pride having in truth simply made pretence of one, so that all the villagers might see her husband in such style as became him—see him to the astonishment of their eyes. The grocery store being centrally situated, what should hinder them but see!

"Whew!" whistled the grocer, coming forward with both hands uplifted, "What's to pay, Peter; have you been getting married, or anything?"

"You speak wisdom unbeknown," says Peter, "that's just what I have been doing."

The grocer whistled again, and then he says, "Who did you marry, pray?"

"My wife," says Peter, without a smile, and then seating himself on the edge of the counter, he inquires if the grocer has any milk crocks; "them's what my good woman sent me after," says he.

Mr. Hoops came in at this juncture, lighted his cigar, and having made some inquiries concerning the prices of bacon, potatoes, sugar and tea, with reference to his proposed housekeeping, came to the great news with which he was all the time bursting, and which he had withheld from Miss Goke chiefly because he had happened to become engaged to her. He had observed, perhaps, that as a general rule, married men told the news elsewhere than at home, and was resolved to begin in the regular way, betimes. For, certain it is, he cared not a straw nor a shaving for either the grocer or Mr. Whiteflock, and it is equally certain that he did care,

in some sort, for Miss P. Goke, and why, therefore, there should have arisen in his mind from the moment of his engagement to her a kind of secret antagonism that led him to suppress the very thing which he knew would give her pleasure, I leave for the wisdom element to determine; being a woman I would not presume to understand. He talked of the show and the showmen, of all the birds and beasts, discussing their various natures, habits, beauties, uses and the like, quite as though he had the whole history of the animal kingdom by heart.

He told how everybody was going to the show that night. "There will doubtless be in attendance," said he, "one o' the wastest assemblies ever convened under canvass!"

"And you will, of course, take Miss Goke to see the performances?" says the grocer, who from his shop window had observed the cooper's little attentions; he had, in fact, observed the apron of shavings, and had not miscalculated when he had taken for granted that they would kindle a flame; but what he based his conclusion upon even more than this, was the fact that he had twice seen him whip Miss Goke's little poodle, smartly, holding said poodle by the ear the while, as though it were not done surreptitiously, but rather by authority. And another thing which had been a strong supposition in favor, was that he had heard the cooper scold Miss Goke's parrot, keying his voice upon an irritable sharp; the scolding being drawn down upon the head of the innocent parrot simply and solely in consequence of her saying, "Poor Polly is sick, and wants Dr. Allprice." In view of all this the grocer had felt justified in saying to the cooper, "You will take Miss Goke to the show?" And afterward, aside to Mr. Whiteflock, "We shall see what we shall see!"

"No," says the cooper, with a lofty air, and, in fact as though he were the keeper and guardian of some imbecile quite incapable of deciding for itself. "No, sir, I shall not take Miss Goke to the show; it isn't a fit place for ladies; the wery wiolin is wanquishin' to wirtue." And then he says, "Such things'll do well enough for us men." Adding directly, "She's all a-tiptoe to go, Miss Goke is, for the wanity of women leads 'em constant where women has no business fur to be, and I fur one, don't mean fur to encourage 'em."

"I've an idea," says Peter, "that places that are unfit for women to go to, always will be so while women are kept away from them."

No attention was paid to this foolish notion of Peter, and by degrees the cooper came up to the cream of his news.

"Do any one of you know Mr. Gayfeather?" says he, "our late fellow-citizen."

"Is he dead!" says the grocer in amazement.

"Dead, no! I should say he was wery much alive; he's going to be married anyhow!"

"Married! you don't say? Why he's only been here a few weeks, but maybe 'tain't any one about here that he's took up with; it can't be true, I reckon." Then the grocer adds, "He smokes awful, they say. Well, what's one man's meat is another's pison!"

Perhaps he was thinking how much the habit of Mr. Gayfeather might increase his trade.

"Yes, sir-ee!" says the cooper, "it's true, veritably true. I had it, sir, from his own mouth, sir!" And he knocks the ashes from his cigar and looks around in triumph.

"Yes, sir, it's veritably true; and though I'm bound to keep the secret, I may just say it's no new thing, though Charley Gay is only a late citizen."

Then he tells how wery rich Mr. Gayfeather is, and what a splendid hand he plays at euchre, winning invariably without taking ondue advantage; how liberal he is in the matter of drinks; how much he can swaller without bein' wictimized, and what a gay, good-humored fellow he is, generally. He calls him "Charley" all the while; talks of his money and his importance as though they directly reflected credit upon himself, and in the end discloses everything except Miss Lightwait's name.

"The lady you both know wery well," says he, "she don't live more'n three stone throw from my shop; Miss Goke makes her bonnets, and she wears a welvet in winter, but I'll wenter she has a white 'un afore long. She ain't so wery young, neither, and she has a wart on the left cheek that disfigers her some, accordin' to my taste, but Charley knows what he's about I reckon, and counts on some advantage; and then the affair is of old standin'."

Here he tells the story of the early courtship, of the father's opposition, and of how the girl came to grief—a story that everybody has heard in one shape or another.

"So-ho!" says the grocer, "that's the way the cat jumps, is it?" And he went straight to his cigar-case, and looked in it with smiling satisfaction. Whether Miss Lightwait were going to do ill or well that was another matter.

The news of highest import being off his mind, the cooper comes down to Samuel and his prospects. "Some," says he, "have called him a wagabond; I never did: Some, again, have said he was a wile character; I wasn't one o' them, nuther, and there was them that was for havin' him hung, right off; but for my part I always thought he was a valuable citizen, and I never raly believed he meant to shoot the bishop's son no more'n what I did!"

And then, he says, "By all accounts he's goin' to be rich enough to buy and sell all Bloomington, if he has a mind." And, finally, he says that Charley has been in town this two days, a-workin' in Sam's behalf, and that he will wenter a winegar cag agin two pins, that both Sam and Charley will be in the willage afore sundown!"

This is news, indeed; but why shouldn't he have told Miss Goke!

There was a good deal of talk and speculation, surmising and idle gossip, between the grocer and the cooper; to say truth, it lasted for hours, both neglecting all legitimate work for its sake; and when they had exhausted all fact and all guess-work, dipping into scandal and rolling coarse epithets like dainty morsels under their tongues; when, in fact, they could think of nothing further to say, they exacted the promise, each of the other, that no hint of all should be communicated to any woman! "If their tongues get a-going, they'll never stop!" says the grocer.

"Werily that's true, they'll never stop!" echoes the cooper, and then they fell to gossiping again, and repeated two or three times over what they had already said.

Peter had been for the last ten minutes in one of those semi-trances, in which he always seemed to be about half withdrawn from this world. At last he said, speaking in soliloquy, "Samuel's coming out brilliant, just as I foreseen, but I can't see one thing that I'd like to see. There's a shadder comes before me as often as I try."

"Peter, are you asleep, man?" says the grocer.

At that he comes out of his trance, slides from the counter

where he has been sitting all unconscious of the gossip, apparently, and with a nod, goes out, and after a little caressing of Posey, drives slowly away.

"A very remarkable man," says the grocer, looking after him.

"Wery remarkable," responds the cooper; "I always said that of him." And then he says, "Did you mind how feeble he stood onto his legs? We'll lose a valuable citizen, sir, when we lose him."

"Valuable, indeed!" says the grocer, "my Adely Maud, owes her life to him."

"Those clothes he had onto him wasn't made into this willage," says the cooper.

"No, nor the new carriage nuther," says the grocer, "and the two, betwixt 'em, must have cost nigh onto a cool thousan'." Then they both said again he was a remarkable man.

On his setting out from home Peter had not designed to obey his wife's injunction, and call upon Miss Lightwait; he had never been at the parsonage since the coming of the bishop's son, being as he said, impressed with the belief that he should not feel at home there; but what he heard at the grocery set him thinking, and somehow produced the trance-like effect already mentioned.

He rode through the village without looking to the right or left, without seeming to see or to think, but when he came to the parsonage he drew rein and walked straight to the main entrance as one, if not consciously welcome, at least in no wise abashed.

He found Miss Lightwait alone, and was received by her with a stately courtesy, that must have disconcerted him if he had not believed himself impelled and sustained by some power external to himself. It was she, indeed, that was put to confusion, so strangely superior to himself did he appear, and so well did he set before her the perils of her position.

"If this stranger has been playing cards and drinking with the cooper, and telling him all his secrets, he is not the man you have taken him for," he said. "I implore you by all sacred memories, by all blessed hopes, to have nothing further to do with him."

"By what authority do you come here to instruct me in my duties?" says Katherine, loftily.

A change came over the face of Peter at this, and he seemed as one speaking in his sleep.

"By the authority of my earthly relation, and spiritual guardianship — I am your father."

"Nonsense," says Katherine, "You are Peter Whiteflock, and crazy at that!"

"You are wrong there, my Kate, as you are likely to be." I am using Peter to communicate with you, just as you would use an interpreter if forced to speak in a strange tongue." Then he said, abruptly, "Ruth is with me."

"If you are my father, why can't I see you?"

"Why can't you see the stars at noonday?"

"Tell me something, then, that will convince me you are here, and tell who is Ruth?"

"I will tell you then that I do not like this Gayfeather of yours any better than I did twenty years ago, he is not to be trusted."

"There is no need that a spirit should come back to say that!" And Katherine laughed proudly.

"Ah my Kate, you are the same perverse child you always were. Would you could see as I see, and you would recede from the precipice upon which you stand."

"All that a mortal man might easily say," replies Katherine. "If you see so much, tell me what is under this."

And she placed her hand on a small silver salver under which she had slipped a letter that she was engaged in reading when Peter was announced.

"It is a letter, and in the letter is a torn piece of lace," said the voice, for it seemed not to be Peter that spoke, but only Peter's tongue. "Give it into the hand of this man and he will read it."

Katherine hesitated, but Peter put forth his hand automatically, and she pushed aside the salver and gave him the letter. He placed it against his forehead, and after a moment, read, without taking the letter from the envelope, and with closed eyes.

"My sweet Kate: — To prove to you that your memory has been fondly cherished all these years, I return to you a little souvenir that is dearer to me than the 'ruddy drops

that visit this sad heart.' Suffer no harm to come to it, but let me have it back; I will hold it for a talisman, 'and call upon it in a storm, and save the ship from perishing some time.'

"Ever, scorned though I may be, your own true, true lover,
C. P. G."

"You are possessed of the Devil, that's what you are!" cries Katherine, blushing and dashing the angry tears from her eyes, and then seizing the letter, she hid it in her bosom and clasping her hands upon it silently rocked herself to and fro, as a mother might rock the baby she had snatched from destruction.

"O, my Kate! my poor lost Kate! if you could only know how you grieve your mother and me!"

The last words trembled on Peter's tongue, and he fell sobbing. But Katherine was only moved to anger, and would hear no more, and directly Peter came to himself. "I wouldn't 'a' come of my own head," says he, apologetically. Then he said, "I see some one beside you, looking sad, like, and now a woman comes, and they go away together." Here he so exactly described the father and mother of Katherine that she turned pale, and taking the letter from her bosom tore it quite in two.

As Peter rose to go, she said to him, "When I require your advice, sir, I will send for you; till that time I beg you will give yourself no concern on my account."

"I shan't be likely to come again," says Peter, "your spirit friends seem to think you must take your own course, and learn through suffering. No, no, I am sure I shall not be sent here again."

"Let us hope not," said Katherine, rising and courtesying with cold formality.

"The spirit of my father, indeed!" she cries, as soon as she had recovered herself a little; "if my father had anything to say to me, he would say it, and not send Peter Whiteflock to speak for him! And then who was Ruth? I never knew a person of that name." And because of this discrepance she ignored all the facts.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GRAPES OF THORNS.



OUR ride has done you good, Peter," says Mrs. Whiteflock, running out to meet him as he drove into the door-yard.

"Yes," says Peter, "it's done me good;" and he tried to get a smile into his face, but it was like the sun trying to shine through a thick cloud. As he got out of the carriage he staggered and fell against Posey. She turned her head and licked the hand that he put out toward her. "It ain't nothing, my beauty," says he, pulling playfully at her ear. "I done it a purpose."

But when he again tried to walk, he staggered again, put out his hand helplessly, as one who feels his way, and before his wife could get to him, had fallen to the ground.

"It's nothing, Martha," he says, "the ride has done me good and I shall feel it by and by, but just now I'm a little stiff."

"Now the Lord pity us, and send us help," cries Mrs. Whiteflock; and turning about in her anxious bewilderment, she stood face to face with Samuel Dale.

"O, my good friend," he says, "has it come to this!" And he puts his strong arms round Peter, and hugs him to his bosom.

"Don't let her know," whispers Peter, and then he says aloud and cheerfully, "I shall be all right in a minute."

Posey had turned the carriage about and with the rein dragging after her along the ground, now came up and put her head between her master's knees.

"Uncle Charley!" calls Samuel, rising and beckoning towards the roadside. The stranger thus summoned, who had been waiting in his phaeton at the gate, came to the ground with the spring of a boy, and was almost imme-

diately in the circle. There was no introduction and no need of one; he understood the matter at a glance; dashed off hat and coat, and sending his elegant whip to the ground after them, had half Peter's weight upon his arm in a moment, and so, with Samuel on the other side, they got him into the house, and up the broad staircase to the beautiful chamber, which the wife had with her own hands been setting in order all that day, as for some strange and honored guest.

"Now make all haste and fetch the doctor," says Samuel to the stranger as soon as Peter was laid upon the bed.

He nodded assent, asking simply whether it was Dr. Dosum or Dr. Allprice that was to be fetched.

"He's got acquainted speedy," says Peter, rousing a little and trying to speak with animation, as sick persons will to dissipate the fears of those about them.

"Yes," says Samuel, replying in the same vein, "he's got a quick eye; he'll soon find you out, all of you!"

"O, Sam, my friend, my good friend!" says Peter, when they were alone, "if all this could have happened sooner!"

And then he picked at the lace frills of the pillows to divert and set himself up a little.

"Ay, Peter," says Samuel, gazing tenderly upon the wan face, "if it had only happened sooner, and he hid his eyes beneath his hand.

Peter pulled at his sleeve, Mrs. Whiteflock was come back into the room.

Then Samuel made as if he had been yawning, and took up a sentence in the middle as though concluding what had been broken off. "You'll like him," says he, "everybody does." And then he explains to Mrs. Whiteflock that he was telling Peter about his uncle, and then he goes on in earnest, but talking much as if he were talking to a child. "Why, Peter, I am going to be so rich I shan't know what to do with my money!" he says. "You must make haste and get well and help me to spend it!" And then he says, "O, you are looking ever so much better now than when I came upon you turning somersets in the yard. Why, what a boy you are, to be sure!" Then he comes back to "Uncle Charley." "He is going to live here in this quiet place," he says. "You would never expect such a gay, worldly man to settle down in a sober way like that." And then he imparts

it as a great secret that he is going to marry Miss Lightwait. "It'll be strange enough," he says, "if I get into that family, after all."

"Katherine Lightwait will never marry any one," says Mrs. Whiteflock, "at least nobody thinks she will ever marry."

"You're wrong, there, Martha," says Peter, making a desperate effort to appear interested, "and so is the rest of 'em; she'll marry this man; more's the pity, Sam, if he is your kin."

Samuel admits that his Uncle Charley was a little wild in his youth, and that he has heard said he married for money, spent it foolishly and then separated from the woman, leaving her penniless. But for his part, he says, he has only known him by hearsay till lately. And then he tells how good and more than kind his Uncle Charley has been to him during the time he has really known him, and concludes with the assertion that he doesn't believe all he hears.

"And is the woman dead?" inquires Mrs. Whiteflock.

Samuel says he does not positively know, but he is sure his Uncle Charley gave him that impression. When they were left alone again, Peter pulled Samuel down to him and whispered, "It's all right at last, Sam, between your mistress and me; we was married in full, this morning."

"God 'a' mercy," says Samuel, "how glad I am!"

"As I rode through the village to-day," Peter went on, "I see a sign which was this — John Gates & Co., and it kind o' come to me that that was the way it had been with me; I had been the Co., like, and that now I was being took to full partnership."

After a little, he fell into a doze and talked ramblingly of his wedding, as though the event had just taken place.

The doctor, when he came, found it difficult to arouse him, and when he succeeded at last, Peter did not recognize him, but called him Luther, and apologized for being still in existence.

"Delirium is rather a favorable indication," says the doctor, addressing himself to Mrs. Whiteflock, who stood trembling at the foot of the bed, "and, in our patient's case it is the natural effect of this little attack he has had, a mere vertigo, madam, and of no serious moment."

"We will take a little blood," he says, "and to-morrow

morning I will be bound his appetite will be such that you will have to call upon Mr. Stake for an extra sirloin." At this point he laughed, and whipped out his lancet as though it were rather a pleasant little affair all round.

Uncle Charley, who had returned with the doctor, led Mrs. Whiteflock away, and in the course of ten minutes' conversation, and the graceful performing of various little services, for he contrived to make himself useful as well as agreeable, he so ingratiated himself with her as to cause a reversal of her hasty decision. Katherine Lightwait will have him; that was what she was saying, mentally, as he touched the tips of her fingers with one hand and placed the other several inches from her waist, to assist her across the door-sill as they returned to the sick chamber.

"He's all right, now, madam," says the doctor, hastily getting a blood-specked towel out of the way with that professional sleight of hand that is something more than adroitness. "All right, now, and as bright as a new sixpence, Mr. Dale and I have fetched him round." He contrived to pay Samuel a good many compliments in one way and another, and it might have been noticed that in every instance he was careful to address him as Mr. Dale, (he had always been called Sam, or at best Samuel, till now,) and to pass over the hiatus of his absence with a facetious allusion, and quite as though he had been fishing or yachting, or upon some other enviable pleasure excursion.

"I am fortunate and happy in being able to leave my patient in such admirable care," he said, shaking hands with Samuel as he arose to go away. And then he said, "See to it that our friend Peter is not gone hunting when I come to see him in the morning." This was gayly spoken, and especially designed to comfort and reassure Mrs. Whiteflock, which it did.

"The doctor is a dear little man," she says, when he was gone, and then she took her place by Peter's pillow, and, as she chafed his hands talked cheerily of what they would do next month, and next year.

When the evening candles were lighted, Martha, the eldest daughter, came in all dressed for the show.

"I'm so sorry you can't go, father; it's really too bad!" she says, fanning his face a little with the end of her white veil. It would do you such good to see the elephant dance; he weighs six thousand tons, would you believe it!"

"You must be mistaken, my child," says the mother.

"O, well, maybe it was only six; but, anyhow, he's awful big!"

She seemed in a whirl and flutter of excitement, and at first told her mother that she would be home early, and then that she would not be home till late, and then that she did not know anything about it.

"Our Luty is going with me," she said, "and he will take care of me, you know." And then she asked, as if quite incidentally, for a key, which her mother usually had about her. "I laid my best handkerchief in your drawer for safety," she said, "and I want it to-night."

As the mother put the key in her hand she drew her down to her and kissed her; "come home early," she whispered, "we don't know what may happen."

"Of course I'll come home early," says Martha, pulling away, "but don't rumple my hair," and with a coquettish flirt of her petticoats she skipped away, without, as Samuel remembered afterward, having evinced one particle of natural, human emotion, from first to last.

Peter slept quietly, barring some incoherent talk now and then, which was but the natural effect of the opium he had taken, as the wife persuaded herself, and at midnight Samuel prevailed on her to go away and take a little rest.

"I do wish the children would come," she says, going to the window and looking and listening, but all vainly, for some token of their approach; and then she asks Samuel if he thinks the show can be open at so late an hour.

"Nothing more likely," he tells her, "and of course they must stay and see the last of it; old heads can't be put on to young shoulders, you know."

"I wish they were here, for all," she says, "I never like to go to bed without knowing where they are."

"There's the last of the show, now," says Samuel, as the blast of the bugle rung along the midnight air. "They will be here shortly now, but don't wait; you need rest."

She turns back from the window, her anxiety dissipated, pretty nearly, and coming to the bedside, for a moment bends tenderly over the sick man's pillow. His eyes are partly open, and he tosses his arms about as though his dream were uneasy. Tenderly she bends over him, and softly she draws the sheet across his arms, though the night

is warm and he does not need the cover, and then, not daring to touch him lest she may wake him, she kisses the thin, faded hair that the wind is faintly stirring above the yellow, glassy forehead, and then, keeping her face away from Samuel, she steals on tiptoe from the chamber.

He gazes after her in amazement; she is grown handsome, he thinks. And it is true. The white, misty, meaningless look of her face is gone, and the old softness is all subordinate to the energy, power and purpose of the newly awakened soul, so that the woman is transfigured in her very form and features; the external conformed to the internal, insomuch that she seemed almost to have been created anew.

"I only wish all this could have happened sooner," mused Samuel, glancing up and down the beautiful chamber, and pondering doubtless upon what might have been.

Directly, he unbuttoned his waistcoat and took from an inner pocket a small parcel, neatly tied in tissue paper, with white satin ribbons. He looked at Peter to make sure he he was asleep; looked about the room to make sure he was alone, and then, stealthily as it were, untied the ribbons and unfolded the paper, all his rough face brightening as with the outshining of some sweet secret.

It was a tiny pair of slippers that the paper contained. They were French, unmistakably, and of the fashion known as breakfast slippers, and the little high heels, shining buckles and rosettes of scarlet velvet were just so many separate charms in the eyes of Samuel. He felt of the soft linings of white kid, passed the smooth roses along his cheek, and finally kissed the toe-tips, and then reënveloped and tied and put them away as they were.

"Nonsense," Uncle Charley had said to him, comprehending their full meaning and intent, when in his boyish glee he had ventured to exhibit them. "Nonsense! You had better throw them into the gutter. Take my word for it, the more you do for a woman the less she will think of you. What women like, of all things, is just sweet nothings."

After that Samuel had kept the slippers very carefully under his waistcoat.

As soon as the daylight broke he took his place at the south window, and with his cheek on his hand gazed and gazed towards the brown gable wherein was a little square

window that had so often made a frame for the glad, girlish face of Margaret.

What his dreams were we will not attempt to decipher, but doubtless all the colors of the rainbow were in them, for what can be brighter than a young man's dream of love!

When Mrs. Whiteflock took her place at the breakfast-table she perceived that Luther and Martha had not preceded her, as it was their habit to do; for these forward children took the lead in all household arrangements, usually.

"Run, little Peter," she says, for he was always the readiest to obey, "run up stairs and call your brother and sister."

"O, mother! mother!" he cries, almost tumbling down the steps, in the eager haste of his return. "Luty isn't in his room! and he hasn't slept in his bed, neither; it's all made up nice. Come and see!"

The mother required no invitation to go and see. She flew up the stairs as fast as Peter had come down, and sure enough she found it all as the child had said, and worse. Luther was not only gone, but all his clothes and his gun and his fishing-tackle were gone, as well, showing that his absence could be referred to no trifling misdemeanor; he had run away, that was plain, and with full and careful preparation for the event. The room was strewn with worthless and cast-off articles, such as old hats and boots, broken ramrods, damaged powder-flasks, broken packs of greasy playing-cards, novels in paper covers; and coarse pictures of women in costumes made largely of jewelry and long golden ringlets. Mrs. Whiteflock grew faint and sick, perhaps not more that her boy was gone, as that she should be the mother of such a boy.

Samuel did what he could to comfort her. "Many a steady, sober man has sowed his wild oats in his boyhood," says he, and then he went in search of Martha. "Let us see if he was with her at the show last night?" he says.

The door of the girl's chamber was found to be fast locked, and to all the thumping and calling she made no answer.

"Force the door, if you can," says Mrs. Whiteflock, speaking calmly now, and standing white and straight as a column; she had anticipated the worst.

Then Samuel set his shoulder against the door, and in an instant it shivered off at the hinges. No Martha was there,

nor were there any traces of her having slept there. An empty purse was lying on the counterpane. Mrs. Whiteflock took it up. It was hers, and explained why Martha had gotten the key the previous evening.

While they yet stood dumb with amazement, the smaller children clinging about the knees of their mother, or catching at the hands of Samuel and looking up helplessly in his face, a violent ringing of the door-bell summoned them below.

It was the keeper of the toll-gate, ten miles away. "I was afeared it mightn't all be right, ma'am," says he, "and I've rid post-haste to tell you that Luther Larky and one of your gals driv through my gate at a furious rate, just afore daybreak, this mornin'; they didn't so much as stop to to pay toll; and though Luther had his hat over his eyes, and the gal had her face veiled, I knowed 'em right away; for it ain't the first time they've been sky-larkin' about together! Then he says he is a'most sure, though he can't swear to it precisely, that the carriage they were in was Peter Whiteflock's, and that the critter afore it was Peter's, too."

"And were there but two in the carriage?" inquired Mrs. Whiteflock.

"Only two," says the man, "that I can swear to, for I chased after 'em a good bit, not so much for the sake o' the toll, as to overhaul 'em in case everything wasn't right."

By this time the news had flown all over the village, and men, women and children were observed to be walking past Mrs. Whiteflock's house, as if they should see some wonderful thing, because of what had happened. Some of the bolder sort stopped at the gate and inquired after Peter's health, as though it were but kindly solicitude that brought them. All these people shook hands with Samuel; congratulated him upon his good fortune, and contrived to make it appear, beyond question, that they, for their parts, had stood by him first and last.

So Samuel came to think more and more that his late durance was solely and entirely owing to the bishop's son. This, as the reader knows, was in part true, but not wholly; it was the reputed fortune that made him so many staunch friends, all of a sudden. Among the rest Mrs. Fairfax came, ostensibly to condole with Mrs. Whiteflock, but it is certain she knew of Samuel's being there.

She knew, indeed, within an hour after its occurrence, that Peter had fallen down in a fit; that Dr. Allprice was in attendance, and that Samuel was with him; and she inferred that he would remain with him through the night. There are persons who have an instinct for snuffing up the news from afar; it seems to find them out of itself, almost, just as the dry seed that is being wafted through the air becomes food for the bird, that, by its nature, flies open-mouthed. Mrs. Fairfax was this sort of person; and when she knew what had happened, she turned it over in her mind to see in what way she could turn it to her own advantage. She was not long in arriving at conclusions. The doctor will visit Peter again in the morning—conclusion first. Samuel will still be with him—conclusion second. I, as will be right and proper, will make an early call—conclusion third. This sudden illness is a sufficient excuse, and I am not supposed to know anything further.

A great deal more she thought which need not be here set down. Samuel had not replied to her love-letter, and the doctor's affections, since his engagement, had certainly seemed remarkably disengaged.

The final conclusion of Mrs. Fairfax was, on reviewing the whole ground, to write yet another letter, so ingeniously worded that she might slip it into the hand of either Dr. Allprice or Samuel Dale, as the prospects should seem to warrant.

This letter she passed a great part of the night in composing; and when it was completed, she, for one, certainly, regarded it as a stroke of genius.

Proper names and personal references were carefully avoided: dear and darling and sweetheart would apply to both alike, and, cruel coldness, which she regarded as a very fine combination of words, would, in the circumstances, apply to both alike; and as for protestations of true love, and everlasting fidelity, she could make them to one as readily as to the other, and to both alike. Her preference, just now, was pretty nearly an equal balance, indeed; but if there were any difference, it was in Samuel's favor, so much the more by the gold. She superscribed her letter, "For the chosen of my heart," and with the concealed weapon in her sleeve, set forth bright and early, and having reached her destination, mingled with the company like a detective in citizen's dress, waiting to single out her man.

"My dear, dear sister," she cries, falling on the neck of Mrs. Whiteflock, and seemingly quite overcome by her emotion. It is a good while before she can say any more, but at last her faltering tongue whispers some disjointed words of affection and sympathy.

Samuel shrinks away from her, and it suits her purpose just then not to seem aware of his presence. She can talk at him more effectively than to him, she imagines.

"We, mothers, have our own troubles, my dear," she says, wiping her eyes, and modulating her voice to a tone as sad and tender as the turtle dove's. And then she says, "There is my Margaret now, being courted by a man of almost twice her years; you cannot know how it grieves me!" And then she says, "Where there is disparity, it is so much better that the woman should be the older." She has always remarked that such marriages are the happiest in the world. Then she gets back to Margaret again, and plainly insinuates that she is to marry with the bishop's son, though she is careful not to call his name.

"But, after all," she says, "it really does promise to turn out happily, and if it should not, why, at any rate, my opposition is useless; and what right, my dear, have I to be talking of my troubles, when yours are so much greater."

Then she says, for she conceives it will be appropriate to the occasion: "The Lord loveth whom he chasteneth;" and then she turns, and to her utter amazement recognizes Samuel, and, staggering forward, falls quite upon his shoulder in the bewilderment of her surprise and pleasure.

Of course she had said all she had about Margaret with special reference to him, and in order that he might understand, once for all, how useless was the prosecution of his love for her, and how properly and wisely he might transfer his affections to herself.

To prevent her coming to the ground, Samuel did actually put his arm about her, and once having the advantage, she kept it by main strength, and took care to draw all eyes upon her by the obtrusive tenderness of her behavior. She fondled his hands, pulled his hair, whispered in his ear, and alternately petted and scolded with the privilege of very tender and intimately established relations. At last, when she got strength to stand alone, she took him by the shoulders and turned him about; how handsome he was grown, to be

sure; didn't everybody see it, or hadn't everybody her partial eyes? Then she tied the knot of his cravat anew, and told him he was a bad, careless fellow, so he was, not to pay more attention to his cravats and things. This show of intimacy and fondness was kept up longer than otherwise it would have been, doubtless, because of the entrance of Doctor Allprice in the midst of it. She saw that he observed her, and that he was by no means an indifferent observer, and she resolved on the instant to put her experiment to the touch, and win or lose in one way or another. "By the way, Samuel," she says, "I had something very important to say to you! will you grant me just one minute, or half minute?" and, without waiting his answer, she slipped her arm through his and drew him aside. As they passed the doctor, she says with two or three little nods, and the sweetness of two or three smiles all in one, "a word with you directly about my poor child." Then she tells him she will join him in Peter's room, and looking back over her shoulder and shaking her finger at him, adds, "Wait there, I charge you, on pain of my displeasure!" and so gathering up her outer dress over the frills of her petticoats, she makes him a little courtesy, and pushing Samuel before her, vanishes from view.

When they were alone, she changed her tone to one of tearful reproachfulness. "Ah, Samuel, you have broken my heart by your cruel neglect and slight of me! why did you never answer my letter? if you would kill me, do it more mercifully; here is my bosom — strike!"

"God 'a' mercy!" says Samuel, turning away his eyes, "as if I wanted to strike you, or touch you any other way! And now, once for all, let me tell you I don't!"

"You do not believe in my sincerity!" cries the widow, hiding her eyes upon his arm; "but, to prove it to you, let me show you what I have written for you, just for the relief of my own bleeding heart, and not in the least expecting to send it to you." Her voice was quite broken with sobs now, and she drew the letter from her bosom and presented it.

Samuel shook his head; "I don't want any love-letters," says he, "unless they're writ by little Margaret, and you know that very well, and I won't be put off, neither, by any of your insinuations about the bishop's son. If he has got before me, I'll have it from her own mouth; so you keep your love-letters for them that want 'em. I ain't one of 'em,

and I couldn't be, though you was to follow me to the day o' my death. It's agin me to speak this way to a woman, but no woman ought to provoke it, and you least of all, that have known from the first where my heart was."

Mrs. Fairfax was a good deal discomfited, but, not willing even yet to accept defeat, does her best to force the letter upon his notice. "You must at least feel for me," she says, "if you would only read it. Oh, my poor bleeding heart!"

Samuel shut his hand tight, so that she could not get the letter into it. "As to your bleedin' heart, he says, "it isn't a bleedin' one drop; and as to feelin' for you, I'd have to do that if there was any feelin' about it, for you are not a woman to waste your feelin's."

"Strike! strike the last cruel blow!" she cries, almost tearing open the kerchief that is pinned across her bosom.

"Them are strong words," says Samuel, "but the same words have different meanin's, accordin' as they're spoke. Some have life a-beatin' in 'em like a pulse, and some agin are like the cracklin' o' thorns under a pot." And so, he went away from her.

"I hope you are not out of patience with me, my dear doctor?" she says, joining Dr. Allprice in the sick man's room. "Mr. Dale detained me unconscionably!" And then she slips the letter into his hand. "Here, dear Prosper, is what I had to say to you." And then she adds, having stolen her idea from Samuel, "What are words, though, poor words, unless my pulse was beating in them, and my heart bleeding through them! Come to me, if only for this once. To-night I will be waiting, at eight o'clock, in the garden bower."

She whispered all this, her voice trembling a little from the effects of her late unfortunate interview, and the tears that had risen close to her eyes, forced there by anger and disappointment, coming out to full view just in the nick of time to finish what was so well begun. Then the garden bower, too, had its effect, probably. There was no earthly reason why she should not have waited for the doctor in her own drawing-room, but perhaps she had sought to throw a gleam of moonlight and romance over the whole thing, and in the estimation of the little great doctor, she did it.

"In the garden bower at eight?" he says. "I will be there without fail, unless, indeed, I should be sent for by

either Mrs. Smith or Mrs. Jones — you understand — that would put an end to the garden bower for to-night."

Mrs. Fairfax did understand, and the reference to the professional obligation spoke volumes. No confidence could have been to her just then more reassuring; if he had said Mr. Jones or Mr. Smith she would have felt the ground beneath her feet much less stable.

"The doctor has been telling all about your dear husband," she says to Mrs. Whiteflock, who had just entered the room; "it was nothing but the vertigo, nothing at all, you must not be alarmed, my dear."

"Don't let him know anything of what has happened," pleads Mrs. Whiteflock, putting her arm across the neck of Mrs. Fairfax and looking at the doctor, so as to include both in her appeal.

"Martha," says Peter, raising himself on one elbow and beckoning her to him, "I know all about it, so don't add to your burden by trying to keep it from me. It will be better to speak; don't you mind what the hymn says that they sing in meeting:

*"Speak and let the worst be known,
Speaking may relieve you."*

And then he says he always thought that hymn the beautifullest in the world; maybe because speaking was a privilege that he didn't have right free. When, seeing the down-cast eyes of his wife, he makes haste with an emendation; "because it was a privilege I did have uncommon," he says.

Mrs. Whiteflock was sitting on the side of the bed now, and taking up the hands that lay on the counterpane before her, with nails so purplish, and veins so blue, she fondled them against her bosom, and then she leaned down and kissed the sunken cheek.

"O dear, Peter!" she says, all her heart trembling in her voice, "how good you are, and how you shame me with your goodness."

"Do you know, my dear," interposes Mrs. Fairfax, in a thin, light little tone that seemed all on her lips; but Mrs. Whiteflock did not attend; perhaps the thin tone made no impression, and her tears were falling fast now upon the face beneath her own.

Mrs. Fairfax, who with all her faults was a woman still,

could not immediately avail herself of her advantage. "I will wait a little till the first flurry of feeling is over," she thought, "and then I will let her know that I have understood all along how her daughter Martha and Luther Larky were cutting up, and that young Luther was the veriest young scamp in the neighborhood, to boot!" This she thought, and waited, biding her time.

Directly Peter tells his wife that about daylight that morning he woke up, and at first saw only Samuel sitting at the south window and gazing apparently at Mrs. Fairfax's house, but that directly he became aware of another presence, that of the celestial woman who had come to him so often of late. "She was sitting just as you are, Martha," he said, "and with her soul speaking to my soul told me what had happened to us through our children."

"And indeed I could have told you long ago," says Mrs. Fairfax, "what was going to happen."

Neither husband nor wife heeded this somewhat boastful ejaculation; it is not likely they even heard it, and after a moment Peter says, "It is I that am to blame, Martha, and not the poor blind children; I reap as I sowed; men do not gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles."

"Dear, dear Peter," whispers the wife, falling upon his neck and taking him quite in her arms, "do not take the blame all to yourself when so little of right belongs to you; it is I who am responsible for all this; I own it with shame and humiliation; I have not been a true wife, and an untrue wife cannot be a true mother! O, Peter, if you would but reproach me as I deserve it would be some relief, but your kindness breaks my heart." And, hiding her face in the pillow, she sobbed as if her heart were indeed breaking.

"But my dear, you mustn't take on so," says Mrs. Fairfax, and partly by dint of coaxing and partly through tender scolding she got her away at last; got her somehow seated in the easy chair at the foot of the bed, for Peter had said, "Don't take her out of my sight, my good friend." She smiled back to him, and then she laid her hands on the hot forehead and smoothed the ruffled hair all softly away.

"I am not worth your care," Mrs. Whiteflock sobbed, at last, and then Mrs. Fairfax sat down on the arm of the chair, and drew the hot head gently to her shoulder, and made plaint and moan with her, for her own conscience was not

easy, and her heart was as much touched as such a heart could be touched. She could not but remember that she might perhaps have prevented one of these misfortunes, at least, if she had chosen.

"No, I am not worth your care, good sister," sobbed Mrs. Whiteflock; "if I had not taken that bad man into my house and heart, I wouldn't have been grovelling in the dust as I am to-day. It is the old story; I warmed the viper, and it has turned and stung me. O, Lord have mercy upon me;" and she wrung her hands in despair.

Then Mrs. Fairfax told her that she was harder with herself than any one would be with her, that she was worth her care and her love, and that she should have them both; and then, it may have been to pacify her own conscience in part, she said, "You are a great deal better, my sister, than I am," and there she broke down, and the two women cried together.

"I cannot ask you to pity me nor to love me," said Mrs. Whiteflock, when she could speak at all, "but I can, and do ask you to forgive me, and to pray for me," and then she whispered, "there is yet another shadow advancing to close about me, as you see," and she put one hand across the neck of her friend and the other about the knees of Peter, as he drew them up, in his pain.

Then Mrs. Fairfax repeated the old threadbare sayings about there being hope while there was life, and about the miracles that were wrought by good nurses and good doctors, and then she got back to the request for pity and for prayer. "As to forgiving you, my sister," she said — she omitted the dear now — "I have nothing to forgive, and as to praying for you, it were more fitting that I should ask your prayers." Still her conscience would not be pacified, it was like a hand tugging at her arm, saying, "make full confession!"

This it was not in her nature to do, but the best that was in her, she did. She made a half confession, glossing over even that in some degree, and, the worse half suppressing entirely.

"Do you remember, sister Whiteflock," she says, "the time I drank tea with you last, and about little Peter coming in from the barn with some money in his hand?"

O, yes, Mrs. Whiteflock remembers very well. "And do you know, sister," she says, "I could never make the child

confess to this day where he got that money. Is it possible you knew all the while?"

"No, I did not really know; if I had I should surely have told you."

Then she discloses what she did know, and what she suspected — that is, what she partly suspected, as though it had not been, to her, proof as strong as holy writ.

"Somehow, I forget how it was," she says, "I happened to approach the house by the way of the barn that day," and having recalled the circumstances, with her finger on her lip, she says she knows how it was now; "She went to take a look at the bantams about which she had heard, and being at the barn side," she says, "I just happened to peep in, through a crack between the weather-boards, you know, and what should I see but your daughter Martha and Luther Larky, sitting side by side in the new carriage! in fact he had his arm about her, and they were making courtship. Of course I ran away on the instant, having heard nothing, and knowing nothing that I felt privileged to reveal, especially in the circumstances."

She says this to remind Mrs. Whiteflock of her reticence that day, and so in some sort to relieve herself of blame.

"But I did venture to hint my suspicions," she goes on, "and you, if you mind, sister, treated the whole matter in such a way as to destroy my courage and prevent my speaking out."

Mrs. Whiteflock feels that she has been very much in the wrong, and intimates it by a sigh and a little pressure of the neck upon which her hand is lying, and Mrs. Fairfax goes on to say that when little Peter came from the barn with the handful of money, she did partly suspect, though she didn't dare to say it, that it had been given him by Mr. Larky for hush money.

"If you had only encouraged me by a little more openness on your part," she says, "I think I should have told you all I suspected; but don't suppose I ever blamed you, or thought you meant any coldness to me; not at all; I never had a hard thought; I felt that you were troubled about the illness of Peter, and about other things, perhaps, for we all have our troubles, and that you paid as much heed to my poor prattle as it deserved."

And then she says she is sorry now that she did not at the

time, impart all she knew and all she suspected. And this she spoke heartily, for she spoke truth.

"O, my poor foolish girl!" Mrs. Whiteflock murmured again and again. "What will become of her and how little she knows what she is doing."

"What will become of her? Why she will be married, of course," says Mrs. Fairfax, "and in all likelihood she is married now, trust her for that," she says. "She is not the girl to throw herself away. And, besides, they will repent and be back here, asking forgiveness, one of these days, mark my words!"

Then she goes on to say that runaway matches are usually the most fortunate in the world, and tells how nearly she once came to making one herself.

She wouldn't wonder one bit, she says, if Luther Larky should turn about and make one of the best and steadiest of husbands. Let me see! They will reach such a town by such an hour, and there Brother So-and-so lives; he will marry them. And in this way, though she knows nothing about it, she quite makes the wretched mother believe that one disgrace, at least, is saved. And as for young Luther, she says, nobody need have any fears for him, he will take care of himself; he is smart and likely, to an astonishing degree!

Meantime, the whereabouts of the lad has been definitely ascertained. He has gone off with the travelling show.

"And a good school it is too! for a boy of his quick parts!" cries Mrs. Fairfax. "He couldn't possibly be in a better. Why I would not have him back on any account if I were you. He'll make a man to be proud of, that he will." Then she tells how he came to her house the other day, and what clever things he said, and proceeds to enlarge upon the numerous advantages of his present situation.

"He will learn geography in travelling about the country; he will learn natural history in taking care of the beasts and birds; and he will learn music from the accompanying brass band. Dear me, what could be finer!" And finally, before she has done, she makes it appear quite as though a piece of wonderful good fortune had befallen the house.

Mrs. Whiteflock, by dint of this sort of talk that is so light, so almost empty, and yet so comforting, being gotten to look up and to smile, the poorest, palest of smiles, Mrs. Fairfax

runs away, and directly comes back with a face never so cheery, and bearing in one hand a cup of tea and in the other a plate of toast.

The hour of distress and humiliation that she had hoped to see come to her neighbor was come at last; and this was her exultation, this was her triumph. Not at all what she had lived in her imagination a hundred times over, she would have felt mortified, most likely, if she had considered the matter, and yet it was a much greater triumph than she had planned; for, after all, there is no triumph like that over one's self.

Not that she had completely vanquished her original nature all at once; such achievements are not the work of a moment, nor of a lifetime. She was simply proven not totally depraved. The grub comes out a butterfly, to be sure, but he is still a worm, with wings; and the snake sheds his skin, but he is still a snake, nor is the shedding done all at once; he leaves a patch on this bramble-bush and a patch on that cleft of rock through which he has shoved himself, and at last peels himself out, sleek and shining, but his tongue is forked still, and his head flat, and he wiggles just the same. No, transformation is not so easy.

That night, Mrs. Fairfax, being closed pressed by hard chances, sloughed another scale. On returning home to her house she found Margaret lying on her bed, sick, and ready to die—so she said, poor child; and what should she do but send straight for Samuel Dale.

"Come, my dear son," she wrote in her note to him, "come with all haste, and bring a clergyman if you will. I am not in your way any longer; time perhaps, will heal my heart, and I shall learn to be happy in your happiness." This last sentence, she concluded, would have no weight with Samuel, and she rewrote her message omitting it, and adding in its stead, "I write by the bedside of the dear child whose last wish I perhaps obey in sending you this." She was crying when she wrote, for Margaret was in truth very sick, and all her motherhood was aroused. She did not make the tears, they came, but seeing them fall it occurred to her that she might as well make the most of them, and she so adjusted the paper as to blister it from side to side. The tears she wisely said nothing about; it will not be sup-

posed that I knew of them she thought, and they will speak for themselves.

"Do not come back without Samuel!" she charged the messenger who carried her note. And then she took Margaret in her arms and besought Heaven to spare her for the sake of all the love that was in the world for her and for her alone. She did not seem to evoke it, but somehow, the thought of Samuel's ruoney slid into her mind close beside the prayer. While she listened for the expected footsteps, a tiny note was brought her, sealed heavily with wax, and shining at the edges with gilt. Her heart sank down within her; would Samuel not come, then?

With trembling hand she tore the paper, there was no signature to be found, and but just one word on the otherwise blank sheet. "Mercy on me! What can it mean?" she exclaims, and then all at once her face brightens with a smile of placid satisfaction. She had read the name — Mrs. Smith! The mystery was all clear. The doctor could not keep his appointment, and this was his explanation and apology, and though he had written page after page it would not, probably, have been so eminently and entirely successful.

"That is his step," whispered Margaret directly, "go, dear mother, go and welcome him." There was no need that she should say whose step — the mother understood, and having hastily concealed the charming letter, went to the door, and there, sure enough, was Samuel. Wolf had been before her with his welcome, and was half upon the ground, and the other half upon Samuel's shoulder, making a little mumble of joy against his face, and holding him round the neck with both shaggy paws. "What a good boy to come so soon," she says, intending doubtless to signify a great deal by substituting boy in the place of his proper name, and while she put him inside the door with one hand, she took Wolf by the ear with the other, and so, shut herself outside.

And shall we not imitate her example? We have no right to follow him, it seems to me, at such a time.

At ten o'clock the doctor came, and was observed to whisper for a moment in the ear of Mrs. Fairfax, adding with professional promptitude, and quite aloud, "How is our patient by this time."

The whispered communication had been as brief as the

written one, and was as peculiarly delightful, converting all the ground that had grown arid between them of late, into a field of flowers, as it were. It was this: "A boy!" Why he omitted the accustomed adjective that of right goes with boy, I cannot pretend to explain, but suspect it was solely owing to the exigent professional demand.

CHAPTER XIX.

MARGARET ACCEPTS SAMUEL.



EN days or a fortnight following, upon the evening that closed our last chapter, brought nothing remarkable to pass. The same comments upon the runaway match, if match it were, had been made forty times, at least, and the zest with which the affair had at first been discussed, had lost its keen edge.

"Mrs. Whiteflock will drop her feathers now!" or words to that effect, had been pronounced a great many times, too, and her name was beginning to be mentioned with a sigh of sympathy. "She sees her own troubles, poor lady," the humbler of her neighbors were saying; "and I, for one, wouldn't put a straw in her way." But they said this as though the forbearance were marvellously gracious, and almost as though they added, "I wouldn't take a straw out of her way, neither!" And if the naked truth had been stripped out, I am afraid that few would have been found really and truly sorry for the loss of the carriage. "It's too bad," they said, "that Luther Larky should have taken the beautiful phaeton into the bargain! And Mrs. Whiteflock never once to have set her foot in it! just think!" But the tone of these pitiful exclamations was apt to be a little triumphant in the stead of a little tender.

"Will she show her head at church?" was a question that

ran from mouth to mouth ; and when Sunday came and went, and she had not filled her accustomed place, there was many a significant nod and wink among the members of the congregation.

She had a little modesty, as they were glad to see !

Mr. Gayfeather, meantime, was making himself the most agreeable man in the neighborhood ; he knew everybody, from the foremost farmers and churchmen, to the lowest menial of the Eagle Hotel, and all who knew him had some kind word to say of him. "A good fellow !" every one said — not a good man, mark you — and it was not uncommon to hear young men of half his years addressing him as "Charley." He continually courted popularity. If he chanced to meet Miss Goke, for instance, he contrived to make it appear that Miss Goke, of all persons, was the one it gave him most pleasure to meet ; that taking off his hat to her was, in fact, almost an infinite delight, so that the smile Miss Goke fetched up in acknowledgment, usually brightened her face for some hours after such chance meeting. "That's a splendid colt of yours," he would say to the farmer ; "If I were a rich man like you, I would have him in my stables before many hours, let his price be what it might." And somehow the farmer would feel an added consequence, almost as though the weight of his horse had already been paid him in gold.

He was always just on the point of doing every one some great service, which was seldom done in verity ; but he contrived to make the will pass for the deed to a surprising extent. He had, in fact, a visionary shoulder that he put to a visionary wheel upon all occasions, and as this method neither soiled his coat nor tired his shoulder, he was always ready to help his friends. He was not a member of the church, he only wished he were worthy to be so, he said, but he attended service regularly, even sang with unction, from the hymn-book of his neighbor, and all the same whether the neighbor chanced to be a poor old woman, an apprentice lad, or a pretty girl. So when he said he wished he were worthy, it went for nothing, and the good old ladies nodded their plain bonnets, as much as to say, we will get him for good and all, yet. He set a subscription afoot, heading it himself with most liberal figures, for the painting, and re-furnishing of the meeting-house, and always when the contri-

bution-box came round his pretty white hand went into his pocket and out again with the liveliest degree of satisfaction, apparently. To one rheumatic old woman he presented a hassock, upon which the old woman set up an opinion, with the setting down of her knees, to the effect that Mr. Gayfeather had never been expelled from college, and so far from being disliked by the good old bishop, he had been beloved by him even as his own son! So much for the hassock.

"Charley Gay is a wery nice fellow, he is!" says the cooper, one day, just as the meeting-house was beginning to shine out from among the dingy, old gravestones with which it was surrounded. "A wery nice fellow he is, and I can't believe he to going to belittle himself by marrying old Katy Lightwait!"

He had stopped at Mrs. Whiteflock's gate to inquire after Peter when he said this, and he held his head aloft as though he were looking down upon Miss Lightwait from some majestic height.

"What if the belittling should turn out to be on the other side?" says Mrs. Whiteflock, pausing on her way to the garden.

"Tother side!" cries the cooper, with indignant astonishment; "tother side, indeed! why Kate's an old maid, within five or six year of his own age, I'll wenter a beer keg onto that!"

Then Mrs. Whiteflock tells him that she should hardly expect him to speak in that way of the maiden sisterhood, after what she has heard. And she mentioned his reported engagement to Miss P. Goke.

"That's a wery different thing," says the cooper, stiffly; "a wery different thing!" And then he says, Katy Lightwait may be wirtuous enough for all he knows, but she hasn't got no trade, and he can't see what Charley Gay wants of her.

Mrs. Whiteflock smiled, and, nodding, passed him along, and joined Peter, who was sitting in the sunshine of the garden he had been used to cultivate with so much pains and pleasure. As the cooper passed Miss P. Goke's window, he gave a sharp thump on the sash, which brought her to the door at once. "All right!" says he, motioning with his double fist in a way to indicate that the sooner she returned to her work, the better, and then, sauntering good-humoredly

into the grocery store he reported that he had seen Peter Whiteflock walking in his garden, and looking just as well as ever, and he gave it as his opinion that Dr. Allprice was about the greatest doctor in the universe! And then it ran from one to another, until it was all over the neighborhood and over all the country that Peter Whiteflock had been as good as raised from the dead, and that the great Dr. Allprice had raised him!

If the cooper had reported strictly, he would have said that Peter was sitting in his garden, — not walking, — and if he had taken pains to inquire he would have found that he had not walked at all, and could not walk, but that he had been wheeled out into the sunshine by his faithful friend Samuel Dale, — wheeled out, when the day was at the warmest, to look upon the fading face of things which he felt to be fast vanishing from his sight.

If he had gone close, he would have seen in what leaden rims his sunken eyes were set; that one arm dangled helpless, as though it were tied at the joints by strings, and that his feet were swollen up out of his shoes till they looked like a couple of puff-balls; he did not go close, however, and he did not report strictly in accordance with what he saw at a distance, and Dr. Allprice was the gainer, so much the more by the carelessness.

Other trump cards were played into the Doctor's hand about this time. Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Smith contributing largely to his winning game; each had become the mother of a *fine boy*, and each was resolved to christen her child in the Doctor's honor — "Prosper Allprice." These two great events were to be in some sort converted into one, by the christening of the two children at the same time. Half the town's women were working their hearts into baby-embroideries for the occasion, and the general feeling was that Dr. Allprice was somehow or other deserving of a great deal of credit.

"I should have been childless but for him!" says Mrs. Fairfax. "O, but his skill is something wonderful! Margaret was in the last stage of consumption, and now she is blooming like a rose. And nothing did it all but the Doctor's medicine."

"Indeed! Indeed!" said those who heard, all agape with wonder at the little great man; and the controversy

was only as to whether the mercury or the blood-letting had been the more efficacious.

Samuel Dale, as may be supposed, had contributed his share to the gossip of the fortnight; he had been generally received back with open arms, because of his heirship, it is to be presumed, and not because of himself; but there were, as will always happen, some that were disaffected, and foremost among these was the bishop's son.

"Are we then to have back in the congregation and at the sacrament," says he, "this man who is no better than a murderer? And all because of a little shining dust! Are we to clasp his reeking hand as though it were milk-white, and to call him brother?"

For his part, he was filled with holy horror at the thought, and could not rest day nor night. In fact the laxity of the church discipline had all at once become a sore grief to him. He made pastoral visits with a zeal that had never actuated him till now, stirring up all hearts, as much as he might, against Samuel. He was not vindictive, he said, Heaven forbid, but the church must first be pure before it could be peaceable. One sermon was preached from the text, "Thou shalt do no murder," and another was against riches, from this text: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." And Samuel was understood to be the pointed object of both these discourses.

"Dear Sister Whiteflock, you must bestir yourself," urged the anxious pastor; "it seems to me you have not that zeal in religious matters that I have been used to count upon."

But she made excuses. Peter was sick and required all her attention and care, and when he still entreated, she said that she feared that she had hitherto had more zeal than good works. But he would not let her off. A wrong doer was to be dealt with, and how could she evade her Christian obligation! Then she answered, "Let him who is without sin, cast the first stone," and so went carefully and quietly about her house, teaching her children, attending Peter, and as far as might be, maintaining the general peace.

Then he fell upon his sister Katharine with the reproachful and impetuous manner of a young child.

Why did she not see to it that something was done! Had

she no care for him, no care for the church! no care for anything any more, nor anybody but just this Mr. Gay-feather, with whom she was all at once hand in glove? "I am ashamed of you, Kate," he cries, "you who have been so active in all our church discipline till now!"

"Aye, active with more zeal than discretion sometimes," says Katherine, and she took up the cambric handkerchief in one corner of which she was stitching letters, and examined them with a deep and admiring interest quite as though her mind had not been diverted from her work. She would have been aggravated beyond measure at such words from her brother a little while past, but the rough, jagged edge of her nature had somehow been softened down of late, the old, inexorable severity had melted away as it were, her hand, always open to charity, was genially, not coldly open now, her eyelids had lost the iron stiffness and the eyes themselves had a light in them that was all unlike the frosty glitter of times past. In fact the woman was changed, or rather the creature was changed to a woman, the stony incrustation that had been gathering over her heart, compressing it for twenty years, had been broken through, and it beat once more with human emotion and human sympathy.

The danger was now that she would fall into the girlish error of blind trust and indiscriminate generosity.

"Kate, you are giving no heed to what I say," says the brother, importunate to have all her attention. "O yes I am, John, but a woman can give heed to more than one thing at a time, you see," and she still observed the letters with smiling satisfaction. They were C. P. G., wrought exquisitely in lace-work. She had always put her brother off with a single letter, and seeing the three as she held up the handkerchief, excited his wonder, and perhaps curiosity. "Let me see it, Kate," he said, but instead of giving it to him she quietly crumpled it in her hand. "I was querying, John," she said, looking at him at last, "as to whether your virtuous indignation would be so aroused if the offender were another, and not Samuel Dale."

He did not reply to this, but said instead, "Give me the handkerchief, I say, Kate."

She drew her hand a little further from him, as a girl might do in mischievous play.

Then he seized the hand and drew the handkerchief out

of it by main force, and when he saw the letters, he tore it straight in two.

"O John," says Katherine, "all my beautiful lace-work! You may mend your troubles now for yourself; I shall not help you to mend them, I can tell you!" And flouncing out of the room she cried like a girl of sixteen.

And every day of those two weeks Samuel had been at Mrs. Fairfax's door, morning or evening, sometimes both, to inquire about Margaret, and to fetch her something that might show her he still held her in tender remembrance; now it was a basket of fruit, now a bunch of flowers, and now, perhaps, a young pheasant, or wild pigeon. Mr. Lightwait had made calls of inquiry, too, and once, with his clerical privilege, had insisted upon seeing Margaret. He had brought her the flower of some rare plant that only bloomed once in a great many years; fifty, or thereabouts, I think. "I must needs myself deliver it into the milk-white bosom of the maid," he said, stooping to kiss her, and at the same time tucking the flower under her chin.

"I am sorry you gathered it for my sake," said Margaret. "You see I have my room filled already," and she pointed to those given previously by Samuel, classing this precious thing among them, as of no more value.

"I will take it again, if it fails to please you," says the pastor, slightly offended.

Then Margaret said the odor make her sick, and she reached forth her hand and stuck the flower in his button-hole with a childish freedom and familiarity that completed his displeasure. "I see you have better flowers and better friends," he says, and he tossed the rare and wonderful blossom from the window, and directly, with many formal and cold, kind wishes, went away.

He was no sooner out of her sight than Margaret repented; she had behaved with such ungrateful rudeness. She might at least have kept his flower. What if he were offended and should never come to see her again! A vague, troubling sense of loss came over her, and she began straightway to make artful little plans as to how she should bring him back to her. She would write a note asking him for the ring! that was what she would do. On the following morning came a beautiful book to Margaret from "her always affectionate pastor and friend," and the hope accompanied the book that it might serve to amuse some unoccupied hour

Margaret turned the illuminated leaves with a pleasure that was not unmingled with pride, and the note asking for the ring was not written. And while she was thus proudly pleased, her vanity getting the better of her judgment, for a bishop's son was a bishop's son after all, the ascending star of Samuel was going under the clouds.

Mr. Lightwait, when he had pettishly tossed the fine flower from the window, made haste to see the elders of the church, and in the end succeeded in getting an evening set apart for the discipline of Samuel Dale. This done, he caused Samuel to be formally notified of the meeting, and admonished to be then and there present to speak for himself and show cause, if cause existed, why he should not be ejected from the membership of the church.

Thus much had come to pass, and in such state stood matters all around when the evening fell, that again set the wheels of our story a little more actively in motion.

The windows of Margaret's chamber were wide open, and she sat among heaps of pillows, for she was able to sit for an hour or more now, thus propped, seeing but not feeling the beauty of the landscape as it brightened and blazed with the sunset splendors. The green woodtop was stuck full of arrows, blood-red and golden, and low along the west like some glorious ruin, pell-mell, here a beam of amber, there a bit of violet wall, blocks of gray granite, and beams of blue steel and brown iron, each shading into each, and all at last dissolving into a misty wonder, out of which the first stars swam slowly up, large and white as silver.

Margaret was not *feeling* this miracle; she was hardly seeing it; she was thinking of her lovers; and what is all the world and the glory thereof to the best of maidens thus occupied. She had seen Samuel again and again; he was going to be rich, and would no doubt be more than reinstated in the old place; and he loved her, past all peradventure, and yet, and yet she was not all satisfied. O perversity of the human heart!

All at once, and unobserved, he stood before her, stammering, with side-long glance, some apology which she, in her surprise and confusion, felt rather than heard. His arms were full of flowers, and his happy heart beat a brightness up into his face that shamed his flowers as he drew near her and strewed them, with down-cast, bashful eyes, along the snow-white coverlid.

"Dear, dear Margaret," he says, in low, tremulous tones, "at last — at last."

Margaret put aside his serious meaning with a little light laughter and clapping of her pretty hands. "Only see my pillow," she cries, "it is fit for a queen; just a heap of roses!"

"Then it is fit for you," says Samuel, "for you are my queen of girls." And as he said this he shied away, turning his face quite from her.

She was vexed with him now. "If I am your queen," she said, in her pretty artfulness, "why then you must come and crown me!" and she tossed him a handful of roses.

Thus challenged he came to her. "This is the crown I would have you wear, my darlin', now and always." He had taken her head in his arms, and drawing her close to his heart, bent tenderly and kissed her hair.

"No, no," she cried, laughing and getting out of his arms, "but that is no crown at all. Why, it would smother me; be good now, and make me a real, true crown of these charming flowers. Come, I will pick the fairest and you shall tie them up."

Then he sat down on the low bedside and began knotting together the leaves and flowers which she put into his hand.

Sometimes, as their hands came in contact, he would keep hers for a moment, conveying by a kiss of the rosy fingertips, or by a little tender pressure, the tenderer meanings which, somehow, he dare not speak.

Then she would scold him for spoiling a bud or blossom, or perhaps playfully snatch the wreath under pretence of instructing him. "You are so rude and awkward with the dainty things," she cries.

He could not answer her back in that vein; he could only acknowledge that he was awkward and clumsy, and say that his hands were better used to the grubbing hoe and the axe.

"Don't say such things," says Margaret, "they make me nervous!"

Was she thinking of the smoother speech and more delicate hand of the bishop's son? I am afraid, if the truth were known, he was at the bottom of the nervousness.

"I wouldn't do anything, darlin', not for the world, that displeased you; not if I could help it," says Samuel; "but as I told you once long ago, I am always a-standin' in my own light."

Then Margaret would contrive to divert him from himself with a thousand pretty, pleasing nothings.

"Give me more daisies, darlin'!" he says at one time; "they are my favorite posies, you know."

"No, I don't know," says Margaret; "but why do you say posy for blossom; I don't like it." And then she says, "what a fashion you have of dropping your g's!" Then, more playfully, "I won't be your darlin', no how!"

"I'm afeard that is true, Margaret," answered Samuel, sadly.

Then she taps his cheek with her rose-buds, and says lightly, "So you're afeared! worse and worse!" His eyes fixed themselves upon her face now, full and steady, but she glided out of their reproachful light back to the daisies. "So they are your favored flowers, are they?" she says.

"No, nothin' is favored by me likin' it, as I know of, but I like 'em all the same."

Then she tells him that she likes them too and come to think of it she does remember that he used to gather them for her, and praise them, too.

"Here is one, sweet as can be!" and she leans quite across his knee to stick it in his button-hole.

He was radiant with delight. "I always loved 'em," he says, "but more than ever since I saw you, for somehow they make me think of you; and you don't mind I told you so once? I know the very day and hour, and the gown you wore" — ("Gown?" says Margaret; "dress, you mean?") "No, I will say gown, and I know the very one you wore; it was that white muslin with the little gold stars in it, and I know just how you looked, and you don't remember?"

"I certainly don't remember the gown," says Margaret, and she clapped her hands and laughed, delighted that he had refused to obey her. "It would be so hard," she says, "to remember all the foolish things you have said!"

She had the long flower-chain in her hands, and still leaning upon his knee she bound it about his arms, and called him her prisoner. It was deep twilight in the room now; one great star peeped in at the little window, and the white draperies swayed softly to the touches of the evening breeze, but without sound; the flowers made the air sweet, and there was a feeling of the beauty all round them, which they

could not see, for all the pretty adornments which Margaret had devised so long ago, still garnished the walls, and the few and simple articles of furniture. It was like a baby-house into which a giant had gotten, and Margaret was like a baby, half pleased and half frightened; pleased with his love, frightened lest he should demand love in return. When the test came she was not quite ready to let go the white hand of the bishop's son, and take his, rough and toil-worn as it was, for good and for all.

She told him, with intent to dampen his ardor, probably, about the rare and exquisite flower Mr. Lightwait had brought her, and then perceiving that it had cut him to the heart more sharply than she had intended, she renewed her coquetries with the flower-wreath. "How shall you ever get away?" she says, "don't you see that you are fast bound?" and she looks up in his face so archly. She was still leaning on his knee, and making a pretence of tying him fast and faster with her wreath. He was not a stick nor a stone, but a young man in love, and opening wide his arms, and breaking the frail fetters all to pieces, he clasped her within them, and held her close.

"You must go now, indeed you must," cries Margaret; "only see how late it is; why the room is dark as pitch."

No, he would not go; "not though the darkness were twice as deep; had he not loved her well enough, and long enough to merit some reward now, at last?"

"O my daisy, my darlin', tell me that I may come back some time and be with you always, and then I will go."

"To be sure, Samuel, I will promise you anything," she says, "if you will only go away now." Then she pushes him from her and tells him that he is spoiling all her pretty flowers; "not another moment, Samuel, not one; it is so late and so dark; come, I will kiss you if you will only go."

"No, Margaret, I will not be kissed in that way, and I will not be put off with such an answer; you are not afraid of me, I hope, as you once was, and if it comes to that, I have a right to be here, light or no light; a right that you give me your own self, here by your blessed pillow; don't you remember it, my darlin'?"

Still Margaret sought to put him off; his audacity was shocking, she told him, and she would never, as long as she lived, love him the least grain if he did not at once obey her

commands. "Come, I am your queen, and of your own choosing, you know!"

But Samuel was solemnly in earnest, and would not be thus lightly tossed from her hand and caught back at her pleasure.

"I have a right to be here," he repeated, "a right that you yourself give me; don't you remember, my darlin', when I carried you to this chamber, that is to me just as sacred as the church; carried you in my arms and laid you among these pillows; then it was that I lost my heart to you, and then it was that you give me back yours in turn, for your soul come up to your eyes and told me so. In that hour God joined us together, and whom he hath joined let no man put asunder. Dear, dear Margaret, tell me now, won't you in plain words, what you have said to me already without words? Tell me that nothing in life nor in death shall ever come between us again! I know how far from you I am in point of all attractions and accomplishments, but just in one thing I am your equal, my darlin'; I love you with a love that is as fresh as this daisy your hand has blessed; a love that is just as pure and as clean as the snow when it first falls from heaven. O Margaret, I wish you could see me through and through, for there is nothing in me that I am afraid to have you see; not that I mean to say I am without sin; we are all sinners together; God have mercy on us."

Margaret was trembling. She knew the purity of his love; knew that all his thoughts were as clean and as white as the snow, and she could not choose but tremble.

"Not now; not to-night: I cannot promise you now," she says; "come to me to-morrow or the next day!"

"And why to-morrow, or the next day, my darlin'?" I am here now, and you are in my arms, and something tells me that if I go away without the promise it will never be given to me, and I will never again hold you as I now do. I am afeard, Margaret; not afeard to trust you, and yet I am afeard, somehow."

"O you monster of superstition!" cries Margaret, drawing away from him, as it were in fright. And directly, she says, "Well, if you will hold to such follies, you must allow me to have mine too, and, to own the truth, there is a trifle standing between me and my conscience that I want

to settle before I give the promise you ask ;” and then she added, “ that is, if I ever give it.”

She was thinking about the ring ; she must get it back. She could not give her hand without his ring on it, and then, perhaps, if the full truth were known, she wished just once more to see Mr. Lightwait.

“ What is it you must settle ? ” says Samuel ; “ for if it is a trifle, why, let it go.”

“ Ah ! but that would be telling,” answers Margaret, with make-believe gayety ; “ You must wait, it is not so long, three days at the most.”

“ Three days ? ” and Samuel sighed as though three days were an eternity.

Then Margaret said, “ I promise you now that I will give the promise then. Will that do ? ”

“ It will do if you will tell me what this thing is that is between us now ; I don’t like that, Margaret.”

Then she told him, still making it a light matter, that it was not all between herself and him ; that it was just between herself and herself ; ” and she entreated him to say no more about it.

“ Has Mr. Lightwait anything to do with it ? ” says Samuel, with saddest seriousness.

“ Mr. Lightwait ; how ridiculous ! What could he have to do with it ? ”

“ That is but an evasion, Margaret,” says Samuel ; “ I don’t know what he could have to do with it ; that is what I want to know ; but that he has something to do with it I am more than afraid.”

Then Margaret called him Mr. Wisdom, and said if he was so sure, she did not see why he should ask. But it was hard to carry it off with any amount of assurance, playful or evasive, and her confusion could not be concealed when he asked again, point blank, if Mr. Lightwait had not something to do with it.

Here was a test of the simple truthfulness Margaret had now, and all along professed, and if she had known it, all her future hung upon the answer she should give. But so far from coming out openly and telling him all the story, she pouted and made pretence of being hurt that she was questioned as though she were distrusted. “ You have no right to demand an explanation,” she says. “ My pleasure should be yours, and if it is not, why then take your own road.”

"No, Margaret, I don't demand anything; it seems to me, though, if you loved me you would make haste to please me in a little matter like this, if it is a little matter."

"So you doubt my word, with the rest! Very well, sir." And Margaret brushed the flowers from the coverlid as though they had been so many withered and worthless leaves.

Samuel did not heed this petulance, but went straight on. "There is nothing in my life I wish to conceal from you, and I am sorry there is anything you want to conceal from me, for, agreeable to my thinkin', there can't be true love where there isn't true confidence."

"You are making a mountain of a molehill," says Margaret. "I had a fancy, a foolish fancy, perhaps, about something I wished to do or say before I gave the promise you asked for, and I little dreamed you would refuse me so trifling a favor." And then she cried outright.

Upon this Samuel said that he did not refuse her anything that it was in his power to grant, and that he would dare say she was all right and he all wrong; that he knew, in fact, he had no right to ask her to love him just then, "for may be," says he, "when I see you again I shall be an outcast from the church and in disgrace with all men; there are them, them that you believe in, too Margaret, that are moving heaven and earth against me."

Then he told her about the meeting before which he was summoned. "I haven't," he says, "as you well know, the learnin' nor the eloquence nor any of the advantages that will be brought to bear against me, and the chances are, that I shall be overborne and put to shame, and then my Daisy, I shouldn't have the heart to ask you to love me. You are right, — I will wait, trustin' in God and my clear conscience to come off the victor." And then he said, "If the worst should come, I will never seek to see you, for at the best I am not good enough for you, but be it as it may, I have one favor to ask of you now. Wear these little Daisy, for my sake." And out came the embroidered slippers!

Margaret was deeply touched; the honest, simple nature of the man spoke out so truly in his simple gift. She hugged the dainty things to her bosom with one hand, and burying the other in his beard drew him down to her, and kissed him. "Let them say what they will," she whispered, "let them do what they will, even though it be to put you out of the

church, it can make no difference with me, for I love you and you know it, my good Samuel."

The adjective was, somehow, a little patronizing; perhaps Samuel felt it to be so, for he answered, still more downcast than before, "I a'most know it, Margaret, but I don't feel just satisfied, and somehow the old shadder comes between us to-night."

Margaret understood very well that her evasion had contributed not a little to the shaping of this shadow, and her heart reproached her as he sat there so broken down, so loving and lovable before her. She could not bear to part with him thus, and of her own free will she told him that she would answer his question about her little secret then. She had refused, she said, only with a girlish desire of being coaxed. Mr. Lightwait had nothing to do with it!"

Samuel brightened wonderfully at this. "Nothin', first nor last, my darlin'?" he said.

"Nothing, first nor last," says Margaret, without so much as dropping her eyelids or turning her face aside.

"Give me your hand, then, my Daisy, my darlin', my wife."

Margaret gave her hand, still looking straight in his eyes as innocence could look.

He felt along the fingers. "Not this, the other hand, Margaret," he says.

Her cheek flushed out like fire now, but she gave the other hand without hesitation.

He took each finger up separately.

"Where is the ring, Margaret?"

"O sure enough!" she answered. "Why it is put away. I was afraid of losing it!"

And then she says a great deal more about her finger getting so thin it would not stay on.

"Ah, is that all?" And Samuel spoke as if a stone had been rolled from his heart, and with reverent trust he kissed the little hand again and again.

Every kiss was like a stab to Margaret, and foolishly she sought to staunch the bleeding with more lies, cementing the whole with a little truth. She told him how sick she had been, and how slender her finger had grown, so that the precious ring would slip off in spite of her. "At last," she says, "to have it safe, for I would not have lost it for the

world, I locked it away ; but the next time you come I shall be sure to wear it." And then she kisses him again, and calls him the best, most generous, loving and trusting of men.

"Yes, darlin', be sure to wear it when I come again," says Samuel ; it is a poor little thing in itself ; I could buy you a much finer one now, but none that I should prize so much ; I bought this with the earnin's of hard work, the first money I ever had to call my own ; and I would not have parted with it, except to you ; it seemed to have my very life blood in it. Yes, darlin', remember, and be sure to wear it when I come agin."

Even yet Margaret might have confessed, and all would have been well ; but her nature lacked the purity of his ; lacked the purity to appreciate his, at its worth ; and she braved it out with her lie, even showing petulance and impatience when Samuel went on to say, "Who knows what may happen before I come ! I feel as if somethin' threatened me. O Margaret ! Margaret ! be true to me, let come what will ! Make me feel that I have a refuge somewhere, — a refuge in your arms."

Directly he talks of the church meeting and says, "Can it be that *that* is so like a shadder before me ?"

"It is easy enough to say you was crazy, and didn't know what you did !" says Margaret ; "everybody thinks it, and you can just let it go at that ; it will be the best."

"O Margaret, Margaret ! what are you thinkin' ? what are you sayin' ? Best ? Why nothin' is best but the truth. I know I shall be set down as a blank idiot ; but, come what will, I shall speak the simple truth ; I couldn't do otherwise to gain the world ; no, Margaret, not to gain your love, even ; stand or fall, sink or swim, I must speak the honest truth ! I can face the world alone, if I have got that in my soul ; but I couldn't face one single accuser, if I stood against a whole mountain of lies. Just what I shall say, or just how I shall say it, I don't know ; but when the hour comes it will be give to me, for the morrow takes thought for things of itself."

Margaret drooped a little now and was still. He drew her cheek down close to his heart.

"O, my darlin' ! my wife that is to be," he said, "let us make a covenant, now and here, that we will be truthful to

ourselves, to one another, to the world and to God. All beside will slip and slide from under us like dry sands."

When he was gone, Margaret hid her face in her pillow, ashamed, though she was alone and in the dark. It seemed to her that the ground was slipping and sliding beneath her like sand, sure enough. The first feeling was, that if it were to do over again, she would confess all about the ring, all about the bishop's son from first to last; but an hour was not yet gone when she began to say to herself that his questioning had been intrusive, and his implied doubts insulting, and that her way of defending herself was quite justifiable. It was just a trifle, not worth thinking about. She would get the ring back to-morrow, or the next day, and that would be all there would be of it. But, withal, she was not satisfied.

CHAPTER XX.

SAMUEL BEFORE THE CHURCH.



YOU are not going to be fool enough, Sam, my boy," says Mr. Gayfeather to his nephew, on the day of the trial, "to tell the truth about this little difficulty? Take them at their word; they have made it easy for you—a fit of derangement—it may have been in your family! I shouldn't mind myself to bear witness to that effect; there's your uncle Catwild, for instance, I am sure he was crazy when he cut me off as he did, and left the fortune all to you, you young rascal; or, if you prefer it, you might plead a drop too much—just a gentlemanly foible, you know—nothing damaging in such a confession, and with the expression of a little judicious penitence you are sure to come off with honors, and," he added, slapping Samuel on the shoulder and speaking with triumphant gayety, "marry the girl and live happy forever afterwards! Come, hold up your head, Uncle Charley'll give you his blessing now, if you want it!"

"O, my friend!" answers Samuel, standing back and gazing upon the man with solemn severity, "you mustn't talk so light; I know you don't mean it; but I don't like to hear it, even in jest. I could hold up my hands in the fire, and shout victory, with the truth on my side, but I couldn't hold 'em up with a lie on my tongue, not if it was to gain all the world."

"Ah, to be sure I was jesting!" says Uncle Charley. "A fellow can't help plaguing you a little sometimes, you are so confounded honest! so religiously religious!"

"I ain't so good as I ought to be," says Samuel." And no more was said on the subject.

It had been proposed at first to hold the disciplinary meeting in some private house, but only Mrs. Whiteflock had a room that was sufficiently spacious, and she made excuses; it was all-important that Peter should be kept quiet; any great excitement might prove fatal; she had the doctor's word for that. This settled the question, and the meeting-house, in all its garniture of new paint and polish, was lighted up by times, the poor member who did this work clattering about noisily upon the occasion. The patches at his knees seemed to him quite like badges of honor, and he took special pains to thump his old hat into corners as he put it on his head, so as to give it an official-like air of importance.

Mr. Lightwait and all who sided with him were pleased, on the whole, with the arrangement; it was quite like a hall of judgment; no private room could have been so effective; the great glass chandeliers, trembling and shimmering in front of the pulpit, were thought by some to be enough of themselves to strike awe into the heart of poor Samuel.

The hum that had run through the village during the afternoon, lulled at sunset, and when the lights flashed from the great windows of the meeting-house, a solemn hush settled over the town, and directly old women, quivering with curiosity through all their withered skins, were seen slipping out of their doors, and across the common, one by one, and two and two, their mouths puckering close, and their gowns, of faded mourning, flopping about their ankles as they pressed forward. After the old crones came the common gossips, and after these sober matrons and staid and sad-faced men, and by and by one long procession was seen

to flow toward the meeting-house. All thought of privacy was given up; the double doors were thrown wide open, and the eager, swaying multitude poured on and on, and in and in, till all the pews and all the aisles and all the house everywhere was crowded and crammed.

Such confusion was never seen in a church, I dare say; eager nudges and whispered questions, to which there was no answer. What was to be the order of the meeting? and who was to lead it? Was brother Lightwait come? Would there be singing and prayer? Was Samuel Dale in the house? had anybody seen him? Would he speak for himself, or would his great relative, Mr. Gayfeather, speak for him? Would he venture to appear in person, at all? Boys climbed into the window-seats, and the more eager of the multitude bobbed up and down continually, to see what they could see, and to hear what they could hear. At last Mr. Lightwait was seen to enter the house with a huge book and a great scroll of writing in his arm, and to ascend the pulpit with stately solemnity.

Something like decent order began to prevail now, but still there was a hum and stir that bespoke the general excitement. At last the pastor stood up, and, clasping his hands upon the great Bible, offered a prayer so long that it seemed as if it would stretch to eternity if it got there in no other way. By previous arrangement the members of the church, and all persons of note and authority invited from other churches, were seated in the pews immediately fronting the pulpit; venerable white-haired men and women, many of them, and all sober, earnest-faced and good-hearted Christian people. All these got on their knees, and stayed there during the long prayer, responding from time to time, some with sighs, some with tears, and some with fervent exclamations of "Glory to God!" and, "Lord, send thy Spirit!" and, "Amen!" When the prayer was concluded, and all had gotten their seats again, and while the expectant hush, solemn to awfulness, pervaded the house, a firm, steady step rung over the door-stone, and Samuel Dale came in, and inclining his head reverentially, passed the good people before him, and took his place, not boldly, nor ostentatiously, but as one having authority, for all that, on one of the upper steps of the pulpit. Mr. Lightwait arose involuntarily, no doubt with intent to rebuke his audacity; but when Samuel

turned calmly, meeting his eager, questioning look with one of sad serenity, he sunk back among the sofa cushions and veiled his face, waiting like the rest.

Samuel, as it was seen at once by his conspicuous position and the full glare of the chandeliers, had made no attempt to display his newly-acquired riches, but was dressed in the plain, decent way they were used to see him, his Sunday best, to be sure, but the old Sunday best of homely homespun. He wore no ornaments except his beard and hair, and these his late confinement from the fierce sun and rough winds had served to beautify, so that they were ornaments of exceeding fineness. His linen was as fresh and bright as new snow, and the broad, old-fashioned collar showing under the locks that fell quite upon his shoulders became him wonderfully well. His face was pale, for he had come from fasting and prayer, and his great eyes were lit up with the fires of an intense soul, so that as he looked over the vast assemblage, every man and woman felt as if he or she were specially singled out by their still, far-reaching splendor. He looked like some prophet of the wilderness, or some poet, inspired by the wild woods and great prairies and rushing rivers of the rude country in which he dwelt. Only for the moment he stood thus, speaking to the audience with his eyes, and then his voice came out, full, deep, powerful.

"If there is any man among you (he was looking now at the venerable people before him) who can, with a clear conscience, pray for me, let him pray."

Then he knelt on the steps where he stood, before them all, and bowed his head even to the ground.

And nearly all the house knelt with him; never so many worldly people had spontaneously gotten on their knees at once in that house before. The prayer was brief, and all alive with faith and fervor; it did not pre-judge nor pre-doom, but left Samuel where it found him, in the hands of our merciful Father.

When he stood up again, his beard was all sprinkled with glistening drops; he had been weeping; not with weakness or fear, but with that sacred emotion in the stirrings of which the strongest manhood need feel no shame. His voice, when he spoke, had in it just that tremor of tenderness that goes so straight to the heart.

Mr. Lightwait leaned down over the great Bible, which

he held clasped in his arm as he leaned. "Since you have taken my people out of my hands," he said, "will you not take my pulpit, too?"

"Not yet, it is not time," Samuel answered. "When I can stand there with clean hands in the eyes of your people, or of God's people, rather, then I will stand there, not till then." He had only spoken a word or two when he was thus interrupted, and he now began again. "My brothers and sisters," he said, "I stand before you accused, by some among you, of murder, or the attempt to murder, which is no better than murder as far as I can see, for the Bible tells us that our wicked deeds are done in our hearts before they are done by our hands; and what I have to say first of all, is, that I ain't guilty of this thing, neither before you nor before God."

A murmur ran through the house at this, and there were some open exclamations to the effect that he must not go too far. But as soon as he could be heard, he again went on with the same calm confidence as before.

"I ain't guilty of murder, nor of intent to murder," he said, "but I am guilty of a rash action and of rash and wicked behavior afterwards.

"I came among you a stranger," he went on, "and was took into the church through your goodness, and I leave it to you all to say if there was anything against me till this accusation was brought?"

Responses of "No, no, thank God," from half the church, and then he said, casting his eyes upon the ground and his voice vibrating as if his heart were all of a tremble, "I said I come among you a stranger and was took into the church. I hardly know how to go on, for there is some experience in every man's life that is too sacred to be spoke of as we speak of our common affairs, too sacred to be spoke of at all to the world's ear. Let me just say, then, that one of these come to me here among you, that it involved the happiness or misery of my life, as I believed, and that he who is my chief accuser, took my heart, and as it seemed to me, played with it just for the amusement of his idle hours. I say it seemed to me so, and I know it would seem to you so if I could speak out all the truth."

Here Mr. Lightwait arose. "This young man," he said, "has already taken too much of our precious time, with his

idle vagaries. I hold in my hand the charges which are preferred against him by this church. I will proceed to read them, and at the close of the reading an opportunity will be given him to reply, if, indeed, he shall then desire an opportunity."

"This bishop's son accuses me of attemptin' his life," says Samuel. "I accuse him of attemptin' to murder my peace, and I can make my accusation good through written testimony and through the livin' testimony of Brother Peter Whiteflock, and let him, if he dares, deny this! But what I ask is the opportunity to confess my sins, not to accuse him, and I leave it to you, my friends, to say who you will hear speak."

Mr. Lightwait made haste to withdraw his proposition, a verdict was rendered in favor of Samuel, and the general feeling was that he had the advantage.

"No, I am not here to bring charges against our pastor," Samuel went on, "I leave them to his conscience, and will only say that my heart could not be crushed in his hand as it was, and continue to beat for him warm and kind as ever, for my brethren and sisters, though I'm a professor, I follow my Master but from afar off, and often when I would do good, evil is present with me, and when I would think right thoughts, bad ones slip in and crowd the others away. So, as I said, I did not feel toward him as one Christian man bught to feel toward another, and what came of it in the end, was this,— but before I state it, let me here make a confession. Ever since I was born I have been liable to see what is commonly called apparitions. I don't call 'em so because I think they are generally somethin' more than shadders; but call 'em what you will, they are sometimes such true likenesses of men and women that they would be mistook for men and women by everybody not used to the sight of 'em." There was a stir of dissent through the house, mingled with whispers and laughter. Samuel paused a moment, and went on. "As I believe," he says, "those so called apparitions are sometimes demons, sometimes angels, and sometimes men!" The stir through the congregation became louder and the whisper rose to a murmur of scorn and disapprobation; there were one or two hisses, even. Samuel paid no heed to this interruption, but drawing the Bible from its cushion, opened it, slowly and calmly turned the leaves in silence until the attention of the people was again secured.

"It was," he says, "as you will none of you, my good friends, doubt, a real angel that appeared to Peter." He stepped up one step higher so as to bring the page under fuller light, and read :

"And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keeper before the door kept the prison.

"And, behold the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison, and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly, and his chains fell off from his hands.

"And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

"And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

"And when they were past the first and second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth into the city; which opened to them of his own accord; and they went out, and passed on through one street, and forthwith the angel departed from him."

The house was deeply silent now, so that as Samuel turned the leaves of the Bible, every one could hear the little rustle they made. "To Paul," says Samuel, "it was a man, and not an angel that appeared," and he again read :

"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over to into Macedonia, and help us."

"And do you intend to compare yourself with Peter and Paul?" interposed Mr. Lightwait, and then he says, "These things were in the days of miracles, and cannot by any possibility have any bearing whatever upon your case. You will therefore please confine yourself to the matter in hand."

"The matter I had in hand," says Samuel, "was to prove just what I have proved by an authority that none of you will question, but there is evidence enough this side of what you call the day of miracles, of just such appearances as I have seen from time to time all my life; you all have read how Luther threw his ink-stand at the devil, and how the father of the very founder of Methodism was haunted in his

parsonage at Epworth." Upon this declaration there were such disturbances in the house that for some time Samuel could not go on, and two or three old women showed their contempt for him by leaving the room. There were no actual hisses now, but the spirit of hisses prevailed, seeing and feeling which Samuel proceeded to prove what he had only intimated, by reading from the "*Armenian Magazine*" an account of the disturbances at Epworth Parsonage, compiled by Mr. John Wesley, who visited Epworth in 1730 for the purpose of examining for himself the journal of Samuel Wesley, describing in detail the various phenomena that occurred in his house there in the months of December, 1716, and of January, 1717. The full account is too long to be transcribed here, and, at any rate, the effect produced by the rude eloquence of Samuel then and there upon an audience to many of whom the account was wholly new, could not be even faintly reproduced by the printed words. It began with the knockings heard about ten o'clock at night on December 2, 1716, by one Robert Brown, a servant in the family, who immediately opened the door, but could see nobody; and proceeded to tell how the knockings changed into groans—so like to human groans that Robert exclaimed, "It is Mr. Turpine, who has the stone and used to groan so." And from this the narrative went on, showing with much detail how Robert became frightened and went to bed; seeing, when he had reached the top of the garret stairs, a handmill which was there whirled about very swiftly, and how, when he was in bed, he heard the gobbling of a turkey-cock close to his bed-side, and after, a sound as of one stumbling over his shoes.

The account of the maid throwing down the butter-tray and running away as for life when she heard the knockings on the shelf where the puncheons of milk stood, produced some laughter, but that of "Sister Molly"—at the time about twenty years of age—who, as she sat reading at night in the dining-room, heard the door open and a person walking in, that seemed to have on a silk night-gown, rustling and trailing along," caused those who were seated by the windows that overlooked the grave-yard to shudder and keep their faces away from the long moonlighted mounds, and the mossy and leaning gravestones.

The fright of "Sister Sukey" produced, too, a very solemn

effect; she, as it appeared, having boasted that nothing could frighten her, was presently assailed by knockings under the table, by the clatter of the warming-pan, and of the iron casement, as also by the incessant moving of the door-latch, up and down, which caused her to leap into bed without undressing, and there to pull the bed-clothes over her head and lie trembling till morning. But the portion of the narrative, which perhaps produced the greatest effect, was that in which Mr. Wesley was himself an actor.

One Mr. Hoole, vicar of Hoxey, and an eminently pious and sensible man, had been called in to hear the knockings that were used to occur at prayer time, about ten o'clock at night, and were supposed to be the work of a man named Jeffrey, who had died in the house, but this special night no knockings occurred at prayers. Presently, however, a servant came in and said, "Old Jeffrey is coming; I hear the signal!" It was toward the top of the house, on the outside, at the northeast corner, resembling the loud creaking of a saw, or rather that of a wind-mill when the body of it is turned about in order to shift the sails to the wind. We then heard a knocking over our heads, and Mr. Wesley, catching up a candle, said, "Come, sir, now you shall hear for yourself!" We went up stairs, he with much hope, and I, to say the truth, with much fear. When we came into the nursery, it was knocking in the next room; and when we went there, it was knocking in the nursery. And there it continued to knock, particularly at the head of the bed (which was of wood) in which Miss Hetty and two of her younger sisters lay. Mr. Wesley, observing that they were much affected, though asleep, sweating and trembling excessively, was very angry, and pulling out a pistol, was going to fire at the place from whence the sound came. But I snatched him by the arm, and said, "Sir, you are convinced this is something preternatural; if so, you cannot hurt it; but you give it power to hurt you." He then went alone to the bed and said, sternly, "Thou deaf and dumb devil! why dost thou fright these children that cannot answer for themselves? Come to me in my study, that am a man!" Instantly it knocked his knock (the particular knock he always used at the gate) as if it would shiver the board to pieces; and we heard nothing more that night."

"What I have to say," said Samuel, as he closed the book

from which he had been reading, "is this: If so good a Christian as Mr. Wesley was tempted to fire a pistol at a ghost, why should not a poor sinner like me be tempted in the same way?"

He then said that being in the fields one night, he was met and mocked by an apparition, and that, having been wrought up to a high pitch beforehand, he was tempted, as a better man had been before him, to fire upon the thing, which he took to be only the double, or shadder, so to speak, of Mr. Lightwail, and not Mr. Lightwail himself.

"Just why I done this rash deed," says Samuel, "I need not explain, further than I have already explained, but that I had no thought of murder in my soul, God, who is my judge, knoweth. When I was arrested, then it first came to me that I had mistook a man for the shadder which had many a time before crossed and recrossed my path. I saw the feeling was so against me that it wouldn't help me any to tell the truth just then, and besides, the pride and wickedness that are always in the heart of men helped me to brave it through, and I owned the murder, and made as if I was glad of it, for which I am sorry now, and ashamed, and here before you all I humbly ask my pastor to forgive me and to believe my story, for He who seeth all hearts and the secrets of them knoweth that I have spoken nothing but the very truth." Then turning to the congregation, the tears dropping from his eyes, and his voice trembling and tender as a woman's, he said, "To you, my friends, under God, I commit myself and my offence, asking your prayers for me against the power of Satan, and hoping and praying that when you shall have gone aside, and talked between yourselves, you shall be found saying, as did those of old, 'This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.'"

"We have no need to go aside and talk between ourselves, Brother Samuel," spoke an old man, standing up, his white hair on his shoulders and his white beard on his bosom trembling like the foam on a storm-shaken wave, and then he said, "If, we did not forgive one another, how should we be able to pray, 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors'? and if we were not all liable to be tempted, how should we pray, 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever'?"

"Lord melt our hearts!" "Help us to love one another," and, "Be merciful to us, sinners!" were the responses that rung over the house.

Then the old man read from memory, for he had no need of the Book :

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

The deep silence that followed this was broken by a voice, saying, "Let us pray!" Then the people knelt down, and the fervent petition that was offered called forth so many ejaculations and responses, so many amens, and hallelujahs, it seemed as if the whole congregation were praying together. Then burst forth the hymn commencing —

"A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify,
A never-dying soul to save
And fit it for the sky,"

which was sung throughout with jubilant exultation.

Mr. Lightwait now arose, pale, placid, grave and gracious as ever, but the joyous tumult was so great that no word of what he said was heard, and the only resource left him was to pronounce the benediction, which he did, then making haste to give his hand to Samuel. No one in all the house seemed more rejoiced than he, at the way things had gone, and when at last the shaking of hands was over, and the congratulations done with, he completed the general joy by taking the arm of Samuel before them all, and walking with him out of the house. What he felt, the reader may guess as well as I, but what he said was of the sweetest and kindest.

But as for Samuel, his great heart was melted and glowing with love, through and through; it was not in him to cherish a hard thought toward any man just then. Was he not the victor in all the battles? The church by acclamation had accepted him. Fortune had opened her arms and was smiling, and last, and best, his little love, his Daisy, was waiting to be his before the world, as she was already in secret.

"I wish you was as happy as I am!" he said, when they were come to the gate of the parsonage, "I would share my

joy with you if I could, for I have more than I deserve." He held the hand of Mr. Lightwait hard, as he said this, and by voice and gesture and everything, showed how sincere, how almost sorrowfully sincere, the generosity was. It would seem as if the best that was in a man must have been awakened to meet such honesty and goodness, and it is enough to make one almost despair of poor human nature, to see that it was not awakened."

"By the way, Brother Samuel," says Mr. Lightwait, loosening his hand, and slipping a ring from one finger, "you will be seeing your little Margaret very soon? doubtless before I shall."

"O, yes!" says Samuel. "I shall see her early to-morrow; just as early as I dare; I must be first to tell her the good news."

"Ah, to be sure! and when you have done that, will you be good enough to do me a favor?"

"With all my heart," says Samuel, "what is it?"

"Just to give her back this ring. I don't suppose she prizes it; she said she did not when she gave it me; but perhaps she does attach some value to it, after all; young ladies must not always be taken at their word, you know."

Samuel took the ring and held it up in the moonlight; but there was no need that he should hold it up in the moonlight; he knew it as soon as his fingers touched it.

"How long have you had this?" he asked, and his voice came up like the voice of one who is speaking low down in a grave.

"O, I hardly know," says Mr. Lightwait, in the most trivial tone, and then he says, "Ah, yes; I remember now;" and then he tells Samuel, aggravating the treachery, if it could be aggravated, "She gave it me the very night they carried you off to the wretched prison (all against my will); I remember that I found her sitting on the doorsteps, and that she told me she had just seen you go along. Be sure you give it back to her, with my best wishes for her happiness, and so, good night."

He glided away through the moonlight, and Samuel, when he was out of sight, staggered forward like a drunken man, putting out his hands as if he were holding by the air. That night he hid himself in the shadows of the thick woods, and with his face half buried among the dead leaves, moaned out

his anguish to the dumb, pitiless ear of our ancient mother, the earth.

The next day Margaret looked for Samuel in vain, and the next, and the next; but never again, in all the days of her life, if she had known it, was the glad sunshine of that honest, truthful heart to make light about her any more.

How could he believe in her love when, with the very declaration of it, she had deceived him with so cruel a lie?

"What have you been doing, my good Samuel?" cries Mrs. Whiteflock, as he appeared before her at last, the great sweat-drops standing like beads along his colorless forehead.

"Laying up my treasures where moth and rust doth not corrupt," he replied, and nothing more was ever said between them with reference to what had happened. He gave himself entirely to the care of Peter now, and would tend his wants by the hour, and seem to find great comfort in his work. Every fancy, every lightest whim was humored, and when he had busied himself with his labor of love all day, he was not yet content, but would sit up half the night singing hymns, or reading aloud from the Bible. Peter would sometimes interrupt him to say the room was filled with spirits, or that he saw some beautiful vision, and so the days and nights went by, gradually bearing the sick man nearer to that country where the inhabitants are never sick any more. The gathering shadows were to Samuel like voices calling out of other and better lands, and so far from breaking down under the numerous burdens that were laid upon him, he was continually buoyed up by steady and constantly increasing accessions of spiritual life. The ravelled web of his earthly pleasures was, as it were, knit up by the hands of angels, and the green branch, broken from his tree of life, let in fresh light from heaven, insomuch that all who saw him remarked a sudden growth of all excellent qualities, a growth upon himself, — a larger and higher manhood. Sorrow has her orders in this world — an order of nobility as well as an order of broken hearts, and it was to the former that Samuel attained. The bitter wave of his fortune had borne him higher than he could have climbed of himself, and receding had left him there alone, but with feet planted on a rock, and with faith and hope anchored in heavenly, instead of earthly love. No tinsel star, no foolish fluttering ribbon for him — he was of another order of nobility now —

of that order which God himself ordains, and which is above all the fleeting shows and vanities of time.

"What now, Brother Sobersides?" says Mr. Gayfeather, coming suddenly upon him, one day. "You look as if you were meditating upon hair shirts, rope girdles, flagellations, and the like pious and pleasing austerities. Come, old fellow, tell us what has fallen upon you."

"A light from heaven," says Samuel, "above the brightness of the sun, and against it my sins show black as night."

"Why, Sam, my dear boy, you are losing your wits! you must get out of this state somehow."

"I wish that you could get into it," says Samuel, "and that is the best wish I can wish you."

"Come, Sam, get off your high horse! I am come to you in need of real sympathy and help — help that is substantial. None of your preaching for me. To come to the honest truth, Sam, I'm in debt, and out of credit. The fellows about here don't play fair, and then I've had deused bad luck into the bargain. Anyhow, I've nary red to my name, and what's more, I've promised to take, carry and convey your Aunt Kate Lightwait to the Oak-water camp-meeting, which is at this present, as you know, at the very meridian heat and height of its progress. There, that's a good boy! You have laid me under a weight of eternal obligation I am sure, and Kate would be precious grateful if she only knew — but then she doesn't know, and isn't likely to, not with my showing. Heigh, ho! when ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise, sure enough. But I'll make it all right with you one of these days, Sam, my boy. By the way, how much is there here?"

It was, of course, Samuel's purse that excited this question, and that had called forth the grateful exclamations preceding it.

"I don't know," says Samuel, "and no matter, much or little, it is yours. I only hope it may be instrumental in your conversion. By all means go to the camp meeting."

"Thank you, Sam; and if conversion is a thing that'll do me any good, I must say I hope I'll get it like the deuse! And if I should happen to be struck under conviction, (that's the term, isn't it?) I'll make haste to let you know." Then seeing how anxious, how sadly concerned for him, Samuel really was, he hastened to change the subject, saying carelessly, as he tucked the beautiful silk purse in the pocket

of his waistcoat, "You couldn't make a thing like that out of a sow's ear, could you, Sam?"

Samuel made no answer. "How is your charge, Peter, the prophet?" he went on.

"O, how can you, Uncle Charley!" and then Samuel said that his good Brother Peter was nearing home.

"Ah, indeed," says "Uncle Charley," twirling the key of his watch, and then subduing his voice to what he considered a proper tone of solemnity, he said, "Verily, man is like the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the baker's oven."

Samuel groaned. "Do you ever read your Bible, Uncle Charley?" he says.

He rose up, laughing: "I believe you think me little better than one of the wicked," he said, and then slapping Samuel on the shoulder, "I'm not so good as you are, I'm free to own that;" and here he offered back the purse; "I can't take it from you, Sam, indeed I can't. I'll go back to the 'Eagle' and try my hand. Maybe there's luck in store, yet."

But Samuel would not receive the purse. "It's yours," he said, "make good use of it, and don't try your hand, as you call it, never, never again, as long as you live."

"This money has been once given to the poor," says "Uncle Charley," "and that relieves me of a second giving, though if they come round with the hat, and Kate's eyes are upon me, a V or so will have to go in; as for the bulk, it will be as it happens;" and tossing up the purse, and catching it in his hand as he walked, and nodding and smiling across his shoulder, he went away.

One day Peter asked Samuel to go into the fields and look after old Posey, for he could not himself walk so much as from the bed to the window any more.

"He is getting on charmingly, my dear madam," the Doctor said, persistently, as Mrs. Whiteflock followed him to the hall door, with such waiting, wistful eyes. "Only the weather was, for the most part, very unfavorable. One time it had rained, and another it was hot, and another cool, quite too cool for the season. Now the patient had eaten over much, and now he had been pestered with company, and the excitement kept him from sleep; an increase of opium of nights and more rigid abstinence of days, and perhaps a

little more blood from the left arm, and the slight and temporary derangement would all be rectified. No need for alarm, my dear madam, none whatever; all invalids have their ups and downs and their poor days, you know. I will see you early to-morrow. You have a supply of the blue pills?"

And Mrs. Whiteflock would have her cry alone, and then she would get comfort as we all get it in our darkest hours, hoping where there is no hope. And when her eyes were dry she would take a turn in the garden, and directly appear in the sick-room with a bunch of fresh flowers and a cheery face, both especially composed for Peter's sake.

It was on one of these occasions Mrs. Whiteflock had come in with more smiles and more flowers than common, because that she had wept more tears, perhaps, that Peter asked Samuel to go, while she sat by his bedside, and look after Posey.

As it happened Mr. Lightwait had been walking in the fields, too, that morning, and was just returning as Samuel went out. Both were on one path, and before either had perceived the other, they were very near, and squarely face to face. Mr. Lightwait flushed and trembled, then grew pale and stood stone still, half in fear, half in defiance.

"My friend," says Samuel, turning quietly aside, and giving him all the way, "if you can afford the injury you have done me, I can, so let there be no enmity between us."

Mr. Lightwait made haste to get out of the pathway now, and though a patch of rough wild briars was directly before him, he trod straight through them quite as though he had been treading upon roses.

At the dinner hour that day Katherine waited for her brother a long time, then she sent for him, still he did not come; then she went herself to his study. "Why, what is the matter, John," she says, "you are used to be hungry."

"And so I am now, dear Kate, but I am going to keep fast to-day."

After this he visited all the poor of the church and dispensed charities with bountiful liberality; he had left undone the things he should have done, he said, and had done the things he ought not.

One afternoon Katherine appeared before him in her bonnet and best silk gown, and with a flower stuck in her

belt, and a blush blazing in her cheek, "We are going to the Oak-water camp-meeting," she said, "Charles and I. Can you drink your tea alone? I have directed it to be served at the usual hour."

"I shall miss you," he says, looking sadly up from the notes he was preparing, but I would not have you remain on my account."

He spoke as though he were called on to make some great sacrifice, and perhaps he felt at the moment that he was making a sacrifice, but Katherine had no sooner ridden out of sight than he threw down his note-book and fell whistling and humming of tunes that were not psalm tunes, either. Then he ran up and down the house and about the grounds, without plan or purpose; now gossiping with the servant-maid at the kitchen door, and now gaping over the door-yard gate. A young bird that for the first time feels its wings is not more happily restless than was he in his unrestrained and unobserved liberty.

At sunset he came forth sleek and smiling, but with an eager air, withal, as one might look who had bought an indulgence and was going to make the most of it. He came forth thus, and took the path across the field toward Mrs. Fairfax's, but he had not gone far when of a sudden he turned straight about and took the road. "It was in that path I met Samuel," he muttered to himself; and then he cast down his eyes and proceeded at a sober pace. As he passed Mrs. Whiteflock's garden he was aware that some one was standing at the gate, but he chose to appear unconscious, never lifting his eyes.

"You are going to see Margaret, I take it?" says Samuel, for it was he who was at the gate.

"And if I am, sir, what is that to you?" was the icy answer.

"It is just this much, Brother Lightwait. I have something here for her, and I think she will like better to take it from your hand than mine;" and he gave him a ring sparkling with a cluster of brilliants, worth more than all her mother's land.

As he reached it forth Mr. Lightwait recognized on the little finger of his right hand the thin, plain band of gold that he himself had stolen from Margaret and given back to Samuel with such bitter satisfaction and proud triumph.

"If I might venture to speak for her," he said, coldly, "I should say she would prefer to receive back her own property," and he glanced at the old ring.

"You are mistaken," says Samuel, "I give her this" — he was turning the ring on his finger now — "with my heart in it; she did not value it, and I now give her one with brilliants, which she will value. When I give this, Brother Lightwait" (he was still turning it fondly), "I expected, as I need hardly tell you, to have her hand back with it. I cannot have the hand now" — he might have said, "I will not have the hand," but he was all too good, too generous to say that; he only said, therefore, "I cannot have the hand, and if, as I dare say, you can, let there be no thought in your mind that I have any claim upon it."

There was not a touch of bitterness in his tone, it was not even sad, but graciously sweet and tender, and as he finished speaking he offered his hand, the brown, clumsy hand with the poor little ring shining upon one finger; and as they stood thus together, the soft white palm of the bishop's son trembled in the hard honest grasp of his great-hearted friend, for that Samuel was sincerely his friend, he did not and could not doubt. An hour or more after this, while Samuel was yet meditating beneath the stars, as he went up and down the garden path, a shadow fell suddenly across the flowers, and the next moment Mr. Lightwait stood before him.

"I have not been to see Margaret to-night," he said. "Present your gift yourself." And he offered back the ring. Then he said, "Marry her, too, if you will. I shall not stand between you."

It seemed as if he had forced himself to say this much against his will, and as though it were pride and not penitence that had brought him back. As if, while he humbled himself, he scorned his humility; in short, as though Satan had cast down his crown, without casting down with it his rebellious spirit.

"My good friend," says Samuel, and the calm dignity of his voice and manner was majestic as he spoke, "if God had joined us you could not put us asunder; she never loved me, and my love for her has been absorbed in a larger and higher love. I told you I had no claim upon her hand; you almost force me to say that I desire to have none. God

bless you both and make you more truthful to each other than you have either of you been to me."

And with a smile benignant and tender, such as the mother bestows upon her wayward child, and with a gentle gesture implying farewell, he moved away through the starlight, and the bishop's son was alone.

And this, then, was his triumph.

He was not good enough to be touched by such goodness, he was only humiliated and mortified. All his evil passions were roused up by the dispassionate behavior of Samuel, and so far from rejoicing in victory, he writhed as in defeat.

"I will get the better of this insolent fellow yet," he said to himself, as he turned away. "It will pique him, for all of his pretence, to see his little Daisy, as he has presumed to call her, smiling upon me instead of himself! Men do not thus easily give up their treasures."

When Margaret met Samuel next, she flaunted the diamonds in his face. The bishop's son had bestowed them upon her as his own gift.

CHAPTER XXI.

"FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE."



ONE morning, late in the summer, Dr. Allprice, leaving Mrs. Fairfax's front door swinging behind him, came leisurely down the walk with a hammer and some nails in one hand, and a small tin plate, painted black, and lettered with gilt, in the other. He stuck the sign against the gate-post by one tack, and withdrawing to about the middle of the road, surveyed it with pride and pleasure. He could easily read the lettering at that distance, and he seemed to find a considerable delight in doing so, for as he read, he pronounced aloud, "Prosper Allprice, M. D." This he did two or three times

over, smiling and nodding approval. While he stood, almost leaning toward the gate-post thus embellished, as in reverence, Mrs. Fairfax came over the steps, and shading her eyes with one hand, made haste to join him.

Her hair was in curl-papers ; her false teeth were out ; her slippers were down at the heel, and she wore an open morning-gown that floated behind her as she walked, revealing a white petticoat, embroidered and flounced to the last degree, but not over tidy ; and her face wore an expression of weary impatience.

"What set you at this so early, Doctor?" she says, eyeing the sign, as she trailed her flounces along the dusty road.

"What do you say, madam?" says the Doctor, drawing himself up. "You mumble your words so without your teeth, I can't understand you."

"I asked you what you was putting your sign up there for!" says Mrs. Fairfax, slightly changing the form of her question.

"So as to have it seen, to be sure, my dear."

"Anyhow, you've got it too high, I can tell you that! but why don't you put it up beside the door; so much more genteel."

"As I told you, my dear, my object is to have it seen, and here you will allow me to suggest to you that I prefer you to attend to your own affairs, and leave mine to me!"

"Your affairs! as if your affairs were not mine!"

"Allow me to suggest again, if you have fallen into such a womanish mistake as that, because *your* affairs are mine, it by no means follows that mine are yours!"

"How hateful you can be when you try, but there is no need of your trying, if you did but know it."

Then the Doctor indicated by a motion of his hand that she had better go into the house.

"No, I won't go in neither till I get ready! and I won't have that nasty piece of tin stuck onto my gate-post, and that's more!"

"Your gate-post!" and contempt could go no farther than it did in the Doctor's brief exclamation.

Then she made a dash at the post and had nearly wrenched the sign away, when the Doctor taking her quietly by the shoulder, put her inside the gate.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, so you had," she

began, putting her handkerchief to her eyes; "never was poor, loving woman so abused. And after all I've done for you, too! O my poor, poor heart!"

The Doctor hammered so loud as to drown her voice, never so much as looking at her.

She knew, even though her eyes were hidden, that this demonstration was all a failure; for somehow, women always know what effect they are producing, or failing to produce, blindfolded or not; and, suddenly changing her tone and turning fiercely upon him, she told him she didn't care a feather's weight for him, and never did!"

"No love lost, my dear!" says the Doctor, and he began to whistle as he hammered. And so the injured woman wiped her eyes and went into the house, and the Doctor's sign was nailed to the post, past all chance of removal.

It will be perceived, I think, that they were married.

One day about this time Mr. Gayfeather paid another visit to Samuel; he was in high spirits; fortune, he said, was tired of opposing him and had relented at last; to be sure, he had nothing in hand as yet, but it was all the same; he saw his way clear, and the thing was just as sure as to-morrow's sunrise, if he only had a thousand or so to begin with. He was sick of belonging nowhere and to nobody. "In fact, Sam, my boy, I am going to do the wisest act of my life; I am going to marry and settle for good!"

"And is that the brilliant prospect, Uncle Charley?" says Samuel, looking a good deal disappointed.

Well, no, but this would be the means of keeping him steady. "To own the truth, Sam, I have been rather a reckless, wild sort of devil in my day, and have run through two or three fortunes. But I am going to reform now, upon my honor, Sam; I have been brayed in a mortar and the foolishness has departed from me." Samuel began to feel more interest now. "Uncle Charley" had said he had been brayed in a mortar, and scriptural passages always had a great effect upon his mind. The worldly man was quick to perceive that he was on the right track. "Yes, Samuel," says he, "I am minded to put away childish things, and to be a man, at last; and I look to you more than to anybody in the world, to stay up my hands." His countenance became solemn as he said this, and casting down his eyes, he waited in silence.

"And if you are really in earnest," says Samuel, "why not at once come into the church?"

"That's just what I mean to do!" says Uncle Charley, "and you know I have associated with godly people of late, almost altogether, and to begin, I am going to marry one like Tabitha of old; a woman full of good works and alms-deeds."

"I don't know Miss Lightwait at all," says Samuel. "I only hope you may have made a wise choice." And then "Uncle Charley" switched off upon the tram-way of business.

"*Heavenly* prospects have opened up to me, Sam," he says, and then perceiving his mistake, hastens to correct himself by substituting brilliant for heavenly.

"I am so glad," says Samuel; "things seem to have gone against you somehow, in the past, but there is always a chance for earnest, honest work; it's never too late for that, Uncle Charley."

And he asks what the brilliant prospect is. Then Mr. Gayfeather names a certain mercantile agency of the city of Cincinnati. "There on Pearl Street, you know," he says. "Well, I am to go into that as a sort of fancy worker, you understand; the salary being greatly in excess of any positive labor on my part. Oh it's going to be my salvation! I mean, you know, Sam, in a worldly point."

"But you mustn't lose sight of the more important pint, Uncle Charley."

"No danger; and I shall have a wife to keep me in leading strings, you know. None o' your sour looks! A pious wife, I mean!"

Then they got back to the agency. "I don't just understand what you are to do," says Samuel; "not to receive more than you earn, surely?"

"O no, no! Why what a green boy you are! I am to write the thing up, you see, and to travel about and bring it into notice by giving our advertising to such newspapers as will do the handsome thing by us in turn. I assure you, Sam, I shall feel justified in receiving my salary, big as it is, for I shall serve the house in ways that no money can really pay for. It ain't every man that could fill the place, not by a long shot."

"The house is respectable, I take it?" says Samuel.

"Respectable?" I should think so; they're worth three millions!"

"And you are satisfied that you will earn all you get?"

"Certainly! And between you and me I intend to raise my figures as soon as I make myself indispensable."

"Then you ought to tell them so in the beginning; maybe they wouldn't employ you if they knowed that!"

Uncle Charley jumped to his feet at this, slapping Samuel on the shoulder, and roaring with laughter. "O my sweet child!" he cries, "your innocence is perfectly lovely!"

Samuel felt shamefaced. "I don't understand at all," says he; "I only hope everything is right."

"Right? Why to be sure, or at any rate it will be, when you shall have forked over a cool thousand! that's indispensable, my boy." And wiping tears from his eyes, for he had laughed till he cried, he sat down with his hand upon Samuel's knee.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," says Samuel. "I'll buy fifty acres of land here, and that's enough for any man to get a good living from, and you shall settle down, and grow old in the true patriarchal style. I don't know why, but somehow, I should like that better."

Then Mr. Gayfeather said every man must choose his own walk in life; "for instance," says he, "you would not like me to dictate to you; you know what you can do better than I can tell you." And after a good deal of talk that Samuel could not but admit to be sensible, he grew grave all at once, and said, giving Samuel a little jostle, for he still held him by the knee, "I have been taught that he that asketh, receiveth; but I have asked bread, and you give me a stone; I ask a fish, and you give me a serpent." And then he folded his arms together, and said: "Ah, well, well! riches might make me selfish, too, I don't know; but, Samuel, remember, I only want a crumb from your table; and having that, I promise you, on my honor, that I'll never trouble you in this way again."

Of course he got the money, though Samuel could not readily spare so much, only a small portion of his inheritance being as yet available.

"Be careful of this, Uncle Charley," he says, when he put the check in his hand, "for remember two and two never did and never will make ten."

"I'll remember, my boy, and God bless you." And so they parted.

Some ten or twelve days after this, the Whiteflock children brought Samuel, on coming home from the post-office, where their mother sent them every day in the hope of hearing news of her daughter Martha, a letter from Mr. Gayfeather, in which he told his "dear boy" that he was married and about the happiest man under the sun. He was not regularly settled to business yet; there had been a little hitch in the arrangements; but he had no doubt of coming out of the rut and running as smooth as grease.

The letter ended with, "Come and see us when you are in town, and we'll talk matters up over a glass of royal old Burgundy. You'll find us at the — House, cosey as a couple of kittens. Kate sends a great deal of love, and joins me in the hope that you will honor us with a very early call." And so he was forever and a day Sammy's most grateful and affectionate friend and uncle.

Samuel took this letter from his waistcoat pocket and read and re-read it two or three times over in silence, as he sat by Peter's bedside that evening. At last he asked Mrs. Whiteflock, who sat with sewing work in her lap and her eyes upon Peter, whether it didn't cost a good deal to live at the blank hotel. "Why, it's the finest house in all the city ain't it?" says he.

And when she told him it was an expensive house to live in, and that only rich people could afford it, she thought, he sighed, crumpled the letter in his hand and read it no more that night.

One day Peter had a fancy for prunes; he had not tasted food for two days; the prunes could not be had in all Bloomington. "Peter shall not lack anything that I can procure for him," says Samuel, and off he went to town. When this, and other errands he had in hand were accomplished, he purchased a pair of white cotton gloves, and a cravat of a much gayer pattern than he was used to wear, and renovating his toilet as he rode along the street, came finally in front of the — House, where he paused, and glancing up and down at all the windows in the hope of seeing his Uncle Charley at some one of them, he dismounted, secured the bridle-rein and went in, asking the first person he happened to meet if Mr. Gayfeather was anywhere about. The stranger thus applied to did not know, and directed him civilly enough to the clerk's desk. There Samuel repeated his in-

quity with such a dubious, backward air as made the clerk pause and eye him sharply before he gave the required information.

His pockets were stuffed out with the prunes and other packages, his hat was set awkwardly on the back of his head, and his little attempt to refine upon his costume had had the effect to produce an inharmony that was almost ludicrous. Samuel Dale, as Samuel Dale, was well enough, but Samuel Dale in white gloves and scarlet cravat was an anomaly.

"Mr. Gayfeather?" says the clerk, "Mr. Charles P. Gayfeather? Do you wish to see him?"

"Yes, sir," says Samuel; "he is my uncle."

"Your uncle!" replies the clerk, and then in more subdued and respectful terms he tells Samuel that he had better send up his card in that case, so as to insure an interview. Mr. and Mrs. Gayfeather are at breakfast, he thinks.

"At breakfast!" cries Samuel, surprised in turn. "Why, sir, that can't be; it must be a'most 'leven o'clock!" and he takes out a great silver watch and turns the face towards the clerk.

The clerk nodded and smiled; "he is at breakfast, nevertheless," says he, and then he says, "You countrymen think that rather slow, I dare say."

"I think it is a prodigious waste of time; a wicked waste," says Samuel, and then he says he has no card, and if anybody will show him the way, he will take the risk of disturbing Mr. Gayfeather, for if he has not yet breakfasted it is high time he had. "I've rid all the way from Blooming-ton since I eat my breakfast, and have done a dozen errands in town, into the bargain."

"Show this young man to Mr. Gayfeather's room," says the clerk, nodding to a black boy who stood observing him, and grinning as he observed; but the boy took to his heels and clicked it out of sight before Samuel had time to turn about. He, for his part declined to be usher. He had the grace to inform Mr. Gayfeather, however, that a queer looking fellow was below stairs who professed to know him.

"It's Sam Dale, I'll bet my life on it. I must go right down and fetch him up."

With the door-handle in his grasp, Mr. Gayfeather turned back, and playfully uplifting one finger, added, "and mind, you don't snub him, now, my dear; I have special reasons."

In five minutes he came back, his arm through Samuel's, and running on in the liveliest and most familiar way.

"Isn't this cosey, now? Say, Sam, don't you envy me!" He had thrown open the door of the breakfast parlor and was looking round him with all the wonder and admiration he had expected to excite in Samuel.

"Cosey enough, if that was all!" says Samuel, backing awkwardly against the wall, and without a grain of the enthusiasm he was expected to manifest.

Mr. Gayfeather colored, and made haste to introduce his new wife. "Kate, my dear," he says, "this is my pet nephew, give him the right hand of fellowship."

"With all my heart," says Mrs. Gayfeather, jumping up from the table and shaking hands; "my hand and my cheek, too, if he will do me the honor;" and she offered him her cheek to kiss. Samuel just touched her forehead with his lips, blushing twice as red as she, and backing quickly and awkwardly away again. And Mr. Gayfeather completed his discomfiture by the exclamation, "Well, Sammy, my boy, what do you think of your aunt?"

She wore a gay little cap, perched like a butterfly on the top of her head, her soft, white fingers sparkled with rings, her brooch was quite a breast-plate, and her iron-gray curls, short and crisp, had, to Samuel's thinking, a defiant sort of look. Her gown, of some plain-colored stuff, had a stylishness about it that would have put Mrs. Whiteflock's Sunday best to shame, and her pretty slipper, when she set her foot on the fender, caused Samuel to swallow very hard. He had seen its like before.

Nothing would do but he must come to the table and have a cup of coffee. "I shall not like it a bit, Samuel," says Mrs. Gayfeather, pronouncing his name as though she had been used to it all her life, "if you don't sit down with us; no, I shan't like it a bit; Charles ring for fresh cakes and coffee. Now, Samuel, just here by me."

Then she kept him so busy with her light, little gossip about the young folks of the country, and her sympathetic inquiries about the old and the ailing, more especially about Peter, serving him with her own pretty hands, and giving him double quantities of white sugar and cream, and of all the other delicacies on the board, that he had no time either to be displeased or confused any more, and in spite of his

prejudice against the fine gown and little butterfly cap, and against the late breakfast, felt himself very comfortable.

He had protested with all his might against sitting down with them. "I have eat one breakfast," he had said over and over.

"Then call it dinner," Mrs. Gayfeather had answered. "And really, Samuel, I suppose it is near your dinner time. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves, but truly I am doing my best to get Charles into better ways, and I think I am producing some amendment, ain't I, Charles? And you, Samuel, must help me with advice, and counsel; now, won't you?"

Time and again he tried to bring something around about the brilliant prospect ahead, but somehow that was kept out of the conversation, and the general tone was meant to indicate, and did indicate to Samuel that everything was going as well as it could go.

Still he was not fully satisfied. All that purple and fine linen, all the shining service of porcelain and silver must be paid for, he knew, and how? That was the question.

At length he said bluntly and outright, "How about that hitch, Uncle Charley?"

"What hitch?" says Katherine, turning sharply round; "has Charles been telling you secrets that he keeps from me? Now I shall protest against that in the beginning!" She had modified both tone and manner into playfulness before she concluded the sentence, but Samuel felt that there was serious meaning in her words, even before he received a rebuking wink from "Uncle Charley."

"Never marry, Sam, my boy!" he cries across the table, gayly; "only see what it has brought me to, already. Well, we won't tell her one word about it, now, shall we, Sam? let her think black ruin is impending, or what she will, just to plague her! Only see what your curiosity brings upon Kate, my darling, and beware!"

Of course she did not mind the denial, so long as he had called her darling, and the current ran smooth again.

"By the way, Samuel," says Katherine, "they say that Mrs. Fairfax has found her match at last; how is it?" and then she tells him she has been told that Dr. Allprice has proven a veritable tyrant. "In short," interposes Mr. Gayfeather, "that Madam Fairfax has to mind her eye!"

Samuel knew nothing about it, he said ; they were both professors, and he hoped they would conduct themselves with the seemliness that became Christian people.

"And what of little Margaret?" says Katherine; "you and John Hamlyn were running a race for her, weren't you?"

"I am distanced," says Samuel, without either smiling or blushing, and directly he arose to go.

"What!" says Katherine, "I thought you were really in love with the little beauty!"

"I thought so too," replied Samuel, "but I walked in a vain shadow and disquieted myself in vain; I dreamed, and I am awake; that is all."

"I hope then," says Katherine, "since it is wishing you no harm, that John Hamlyn will succeed; I am only afraid that she is too good for him."

Samuel looked at her in surprise. "I always understood," he says, "that you was against havin' her in your family; but," he adds, "how little we know by what we hear."

He might have said, "how little we know by what we see!" but he was too ingenuous for that.

"I opposed to the match?" says Katherine; "by no means; I believe that nothing should stand between true lovers!" and she glanced at her husband.

"She is only humbugging you, Sam," says Mr. Gayfeather when he had gotten Samuel to one side; "she thinks since she has taken me for better, for worse, (and for worse I'm afraid) that further opposition would come from her with an ill grace; and that is the long and short of it." And then he says, "I tell you, Sam, the best woman in the world will lie upon occasion!"

"Why, Uncle Charley! what do you mean? and this about your own wife too!"

"Wife or maid, they are all alike; but come, have a cigar, won't you, old fellow? Then a glass of wine or brandy? though it is so early in the day; something, I entreat!"

No, Samuel would have nothing more. "But what I would like, Uncle Charley," says he, "is to know how you are really getting along, before I go away!"

"Fine as a fiddle, Sam! everything right now! That little flurry is all over; I was foolish to mention it to you."

And, by the way, Sam, understand that whatever I have said, or may say to you, is strictly confidential; you are not to breathe a word of it to Kate, you see!"

"And why not? I thought a man and his wife was one flesh!"

"Bosh!"

"What do you mean, Uncle Charley?"

"Why, God bless my soul, boy, I mean that you don't know anything!"

As Samuel rode homeward that day, he pondered upon these things, and they made him uneasy and anxious.

"Either the world is very wicked," he mused, "or I don't know anything, sure enough."

The sun was yet three hours high when he dismounted at Mrs. Whiteflock's gate, and the first thing he saw was the face of Miss P. Goke at the window. She wore her white fancy apron, and was running shurs in a piece of green silk, and she tapped on the sash with her open-topped steel thimble, and smiled and nodded in a very pleasant way as he passed along.

He found Peter better, as he had inferred from her smile; sitting up in bed, and impatient for the prunes.

"Who knows but he may get well yet!" whispered Mrs. Whiteflock, as she took the anxiously desired parcel in her hand and hurried away to the kitchen.

Peter had his head shaved, and a blister all over the back of it now, and propped among his white pillows, his forehead looked yellower and glassier than ever.

A small bottle with some black liquid in it, and a long tin box, with lid crimped around the edges, stood on the table by his bedside, and with one wasted hand he played with them idly as a child would have done, while he listened to the news Samuel had brought from town. Now he would identify himself with the future, as though he were the stoutest and healthiest man in the world, and then again he would leave himself altogether out of the order of things. The green silk stuff lying in the white apron of Miss Goke made a pretty picture in his eyes, and as she pulled her long threads up and up, and puckered and puffed, and crooked and straightened, he seemed to take as lively an interest in the work as did she herself. She understood intuitively how to please him, and puffed and puckered a good deal gratuitously, and

when the bonnet began to take shape she put it on her head and appealed to him to know how it was going to look.

"And would you believe, Peter," she says, as she thus held the bit of silk about her face for his inspection and approval, "that I made one almost just the match o' this; only it was trimmed all round here," tapping one finger against the front, "with a frill of the sweetest light blond you ever laid eyes on; and just here over the crown, it had another frill of lace, and stuck right *here* was the loveliest japonica! just like it was cut from your garden this minute! And what do you think happened? Why, you never could guess, and it ain't no use for you to try; and I'd taken three dollars and fifty cents off the price of the bonnet, too — but that ain't here nor there — just for reasons of my own, you understand.

"Everybody said when they saw that bonnet, for it hung in the window two or three days, I reckon: 'O Miss Goke, what a splendid thing! I must have one just like it!' 'Why,' says Miss Stake, says she, 'I must have one o' them, if it costs the price of a calf!' says she. But la sakes, I knowed Stake wouldn't pay no sich a price, an' I told her she could have one trimmed with imitation lace, and leave off the japonica entirely. And says I, Miss Stake, says I, nobody could tell the difference across the street! But no, nothing would do her, but have one like that she would, and — it was just the same with a dozen others; they was all clean crazy about it. Well, it was a splendid thing, anyhow! just think! the frill here! and the frill here! and the japonica there! O gracious me, but it was a beauty.

"'Who is it for?' says one and all. Well, says I, it's for Mrs. Fairfax that was, Mrs. Allprice that is! And then says they, 'I envy her,' says they. Well, that bonnet went home a Tuesday; the Doctor took the bandbox in his buggy, and what do you think happened? Well, now, guess! O you never could guess, I reckon. Well, a Wednesday, just as I was hanging the potato-pot on the crane for dinner, up drives the Doctor in his buggy agin, and out he gits with that bandbox in his hand.

"Lausy me," Doctor, says I, "what's to pay?" I thought may be the strings were a little too short, or that there was a trifle too much border, or something like that, but bless your heart, I didn't dream o' the truth.

" 'What's to pay, Miss Goke?' says the Doctor, repeating my words, 'why, there is too much to pay, Miss Goke!' And do you know I wouldn't 'a' been more took a-back if he had fetched me a slap 'side o' the face.

" 'Pay!' says I, " 'why I didn't send the bill for that; I wouldn't think o' such a thing, right away; not from Mrs. Allprice!' " says I.

" 'And then,' says he, with a kind of sneer, 'This thing is to come off, and this thing is to come off, and this thing is to come off!' And don't you think it was the frill and the fall, and the Japonica! Why my heart ached when I put the scissors in that bonnet, I can tell you.

" 'Why,' says I, " 'doesn't it please her?' " as I took it from his hand.

" 'It doesn't please me!' " says he; and then he says, snapping his fingers at the japonica, (and the loveliest thing you ever saw), 'such furbelows will do well enough for Margaret, if she wants them, but for Mrs. Allprice! ridiculous!'

" 'Well, I thought Miss. Fairfax would cry her eyes out; but what do you think? well, guess; O, you couldn't guess in a whole month. Nex' day Miss Fairfax — laws what a fool I am to say Miss Fairfax, but a body can't get used to a new name in a minute — well, she comes into my shop, and would you believe, she has the face to tell me that she didn't like the lace and the flower; that they was too young for her! And then top o' that, and that was a whopper, she says, says she, 'the Doctor wanted me to wear it as it was; in fact I could hardly make him carry it back to you, but finally, when I said I *would not* wear it, says he, to please you, then, I suppose I must take it back. But it was so against his wish! Then Miss Goke says, "I tell you that woman has got her neck into a yoke that'll gall her to the latest day of her life!" And then she says plaintively, 'when a man is courting you it's one thing, and when he's married to you it's another!'

" 'But directly she tried to get up her spirits as she drew up her long thread, and ran on again. 'She told another whopper too, Miss Allprice did!' says she. 'It was about Margaret. Don't you think,' she says, 'the bishop's son is a-going to marry that little chatterbox! I don't believe a word of it; do you, Samuel?'

" 'I hope it's true,' Samuel answered, and he manifested

no further interest or curiosity about it, just then ; but when Miss Goke went on, he listened with deep attention.

"Things don't look right, to me," says she, with that peculiar intonation that indicates so much more than words. And then she says, "About the long and short of it is this ; the old woman wants to get her daughter off, and she thinks it would be a mighty fine thing to have her marry a bishop's son ; and Margaret herself is a silly, young thing, proud of Mr. Lightwait's attentions, no doubt, and a good deal carried away one how and another ; but mind you, the bishop's son no more intends to make her his wife than he intends to make me his wife. If a certain person had continued to be his rival (here she looked hard at Samuel), I can't say what he might have done ; but as things stand, he'll never marry her ; mark my words !" And then she says, using the peculiar tone again : "Some things look queer to me."

"For instance," says Samuel, hitching his chair close, and leaning quite over her lap, in his eagerness. "Well, for instance, if Margaret is at the parsonage almost every day of her life, and sometimes till late into the night ; what then ? doesn't it look queer ? If Mr. Lightwait wants to marry her, I say why doesn't he do it ? And it's my opinion no good will come out of it. Mrs. Allprice she pretends to me that it's all a beautiful arrangement ; that Margaret, being engaged, just runs in to oversee things a little, since the sister is gone, and that she never stayed in the evening but once, and that was when it happened to come on rain ; but I know better than that ! Hoops has seen them walking in the garden two or three times after ten o'clock at night, and whether they was on their way home then, nobody knows !"

"Mr. Hoops might have been mistaken," says Samuel. "Mrs. Fairfax has common sense and so has Margaret, and the bishop's son, too, for that matter."

"Mr. Hoops doesn't lie !" says Miss Goke, drawing herself up, and puckering her mouth as well as her silk. And then she says, her eyes flashing, "Maybe you'll believe the evidence of your own senses, if you don't believe him ; look there !" and she pointed to the open road along which Margaret was passing.

"Look how she is peeping this way from under her parasol !" And then Miss Goke says, "Between you and

me, Mr. Dale, it's just to make somebody jealous that she goes so much to the parsonage! There! she's looking back over her shoulder now; just see her! It ain't half so much to see the bishop's son as it is to make *somebody* jealous that she's doing all this."

And then she says that Mr. Lightwait did go and ask Margaret's mother, as she knows, if she would allow her little daughter to come now and then and arrange his study, saying it would be quite a charity, for that since Kate was gone, there was no one with whom he could trust his books and papers.

"Well, that's all right enough, I s'pose," says Miss Goke, "or rather, it would be if she went and went away again, at proper times and seasons, and I don't say nothing against any of it, but I put this and that together, and I say it looks queer, and that I will say, for queer it does look; and if he wants to marry her, why don't he marry her? It ain't Miss Allprice that's in the way, anyhow. I don't say nothing against the bishop's son, maybe he is as good as the general run o' men, but the best o, men are *fallable*!"

At this juncture she arose and took her station at a window overlooking the parsonage, and there stood stitching away till Margaret turned in at the gate. "There she goes! I told you so!" she cried. And then she says, "And don't you believe there is the bishop's son coming out to meet her; that shows he was watching for her. Well, I don't know what the world is coming to!"

Samuel took the big Bible directly, and with the great volume on one knee, and little Peter on the other, remained reading apart, till after sunset.

Indeed a remarkable change had come over him since his breech with Margaret, and the time that used to be passed in dreaming was filled up with profitable reading and study. Such school books as the child's first History, and simple lessons in geography and grammar, he kept all the time about him, and when he got tired with working in the field he would take up one or the other of them, and while he rested in the shade of some hay-stack or hedge-row for half an hour, commit a page or two to memory.

"I have come at the eleventh hour into the vineyard," said he, "and there is no time for idling and no time for grief. I must work, work with all my might for the rest of the day."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BISHOP'S SON TAKES UP HIS BURDEN.



CTOBER brought sad weather; there were days and days, dull and cloudy, with flurries of wind and cold rain. That Peter Whiteflock was now about done with the sunshine of this world, was pretty apparent to all. Even Dr. Allprice had given up the blue pills; "it is not worth while to worry him with them just for the present," he said. "A sedative now and then, when he is restless, and careful nursing, and nature may rally yet; but, dear madam, we must not be too sanguine."

Everything in the house was suspended; the servants did what they would, huddling together, telling stories of frightful death-beds, for the most part, under breath.

The neighbors came in without ringing, and behaved quite as though they were in their own homes; and those who had heretofore been strange with Mrs. Whiteflock took a friendly, and even a familiar tone. Common topics and common interests were left out of sight, and a hush made up of fear and awe and solemn expectation pervaded all hearts.

Only Peter was calm and serene. "Happy," he said, "never so happy," to all who approached him; and so he lay waiting his final release. Sometimes, indeed, his face would grow radiant, and his arms reach upward as if he were already in communion with the invisible world.

On the 5th of October rain set in — slow, steady, cold. The rooms adjoining Peter's chamber were filled all day with friends and neighbors, anxious to show their good will and proffer their good offices; and now and then some eager face looked in at the door, but there was no pressure about the bed. Mrs. Whiteflock, her children, the Doctor, Samuel, and a female friend or two, were about all.

It was almost twilight in the room though the curtains were all drawn up and the shutters wide, and the rain came against the panes with one dull, monotonous plash. The gloom seemed intolerable, and now and again some anxious voice would be heard wishing, in whispers, for sunshine.

"It will be bright to-morrow," says Peter, at last, and at that all understood that the end was at hand. Mrs. Whiteflock, who had, till now, kept her emotion under control, was led weeping away, and seeing this the children began to cry aloud. The grief of little Peter, who had stood all day trembling by the pillow, knew no bounds, and all coaxing and caresses were in vain. It was with difficulty the sick man could speak now; but he looked upon the boy with such yearning tenderness that all felt how the cry of lamentation pierced his heart. He motioned to be raised on his pillows, and to have the child brought near; then he got one hand upon his neck and drew him down and told him in whispers that he was going to a country where there was no more pain nor sorrow, and that he must not be sad, for that this was the best day of his life, but seeing that the child, so far from being pacified, only cried the more bitterly, he told him with a smile, there was yet one thing he could do for him, "I want to know how old Posey is," he says; "little Peter can run and see, and fetch back word; father will be better by that time — so much better!" Then he kissed the boy, and at that he wiped his eyes and ran away, and Peter, exhausted, fell back among his pillows. At that moment the sun, low in the west, broke through the clouds and filled all the chamber with a flood of gracious, golden glory. It was noticed that the light lingered longest on the death-bed, and when it was gone, it was seen that the spirit which had watched and waited so long for the light, was gone with it.

When little Peter came back, he fetched word that old Posey was dead, and the event was commented on at the time as something remarkable; for it was found that she must have died at the same hour, almost at the same moment, indeed, with her master. And another strange thing was, that no light was seen except in Peter's room, and that the watchers outside insisted that the sun had not shone for a single moment. The expression that came upon the face of the dead was something wonderful, insomuch that people came from far and near to see it. Even little Peter did not

cry when he stood by the coffin; the imprint of a blessed immortality so transfigured the dust, that it was impossible for the dust to be thought of. Of course the child knew not what lifted him above his fear; he only knew that he was not afraid any more, nor troubled any more. In all the country round there had never been so large a funeral; the living man had never, in all the days of his life, such honor, as now, in the day of his burial.

His grave was made in the churchyard beneath the window where Mrs. Whiteflock was used to sit. Myrtles and roses were planted about the mound, and at the head a plain slab of white marble was placed with this inscription after the simple record of the name and age, "Better is the day of one's death than the day of one's birth."

Mrs. Whiteflock never took off her mourning, but used to visit the grave regularly two or three times a week with her little children about her, while she had little children, but she never relinquished the practice, and with her own hand kept down the weeds and tended the flowers. One day when Peter had been buried five years she planted a fresh rose tree, — it was on the anniversary of his death, — and when the pit was digged for the placing of the roots, she laid a handful of gold in the bottom of it, and if one had been privileged to count the pieces they would have been found to make just one hundred and thirty-five dollars and sixty-two and a half cents!

That morning in rummaging through an attic closet Mrs. Whiteflock had come upon an old diary, kept by her the first year of her marriage, and as she glanced along the record in fading ink, she suddenly burst into tears, and when the fit was over she tied on her mourning bonnet and drew down the veil, and with a rose tree in one hand and a carefully counted sum of money in the other, betook herself straight to the graveyard, where she planted the flower as we have seen.

What she read in the old diary was this: "June sixth, 1830. Gave this morning to Luther Larky, a purse containing one hundred and thirty-five dollars and sixty-two and a half cents, the same being designed for the purchase of John Holt's gray mare."

And here let us turn back again to the day of Peter's death.

It was near midnight, the rain still falling and the night as dark as it could be, that Mrs. Whiteflock on entering the room where the corpse lay, found standing at the head something that was like a woman with an angel's beauty, which floated away and vanished as she approached. And as the thing, woman or angel, floated and faded thus, she asseverated that it drew up the hands of the dead after it!

She came from the chamber as much dead as alive herself, and presently, falling into hysterics, declared it as her belief that she had been summoned to follow her husband. Nothing would do but she must see her clergyman, confess her sins, be prayed for and prepared for the awful hour. "There is no time to lose, make haste, my good Samuel!" she entreated, with tears in her eyes; "this vision has been sent to warn me!"

So, protecting himself from the storm as well as he might with wrappers and overcoat, he set out, and made such haste as he could with an umbrella flapping about his ears, the rain blinding his eyes, and the dubious flicker of a tin lantern at his feet. He got to the parsonage by-and-by, and as he stepped upon the piazza, with the intent to ring, he perceived the faintest glimmer of a light at the window of the study.

"Perhaps Mr. Lightwait is engaged with books, or with the preparation of a sermon," thought Samuel; "I will not ring and arouse the house, but tap on the sash of his own apartment instead, and so make known my errand without noise or disturbance."

As he approached the window, he saw that only one-half of the shutter was open, and that this had probably been blown open by the wind, as it was loosely beating about; that the curtain was drawn low, and that the light within was so faint as to be hardly perceptible. He hesitated, — the bishop's son was not at his studies, that was evident, — and while he hesitated, he heard, as he was almost sure, the murmur of voices within. Upon this, he tapped lightly, so lightly as to disturb no one who was not already awake; and again listened, standing back, however, a little from the window.

To his surprise, the murmur previously heard changed to whispers, he could not be mistaken this time, and the whispers were accompanied by a stir and flutter as of female garments.

It was Miss Lightwait's maid, and the housekeeper, he now suspected, taking their tea and their gossip, with such peculiar appropriations, including time and place, as old and favored servants sometimes feel themselves privileged to make.

"I have frightened them with my over caution," he mused, "and will make a more positive appeal." And immediately he knocked against the sash with his knuckles, and called out, "Halloo the house!" But this, so far from diminishing the terror of the persons within, seemed only to increase it. No answer was returned, the fluttering increased, and the whispering appeared more anxious and eager than before. The shadow of a man and woman was now thrown upon the curtain, for the two shadows were so close as to seem at first like only one shadow. As he observed it more curiously, he perceived that the man was supporting the woman, and, as he judged by the trailing of the garments, leading her from the room. He shuddered, and a nameless fear oppressed him, insomuch that his voice trembled when he repeated the halloo. A door was opened and softly closed again, and then a bolder step was heard crossing the room, and one distinct shadow, that of a man, was thrown upon the curtain. Presently the light flashed out, and a voice that Samuel recognized as that of the bishop's son, inquired who was there.

"It's me, Mr. Lightwait," says Samuel, "and I'm come for you in a case of life and death; open the window for mercy's sake!"

Then the bishop's son drew up the curtain and threw up the sash, and Samuel, leaving his wet things outside, stepped in, and at once explained why and wherefore he was come.

"Truly, in the midst of life we are in death," says Mr. Lightwait, solemnly; and then he tells Samuel he will attend him as soon as possible, and he moves about the room adjusting this and that, in a strange, perturbed sort of way. In the midst of these unseasonable operations he suddenly exclaims, "What a terrible night; how did you happen to come in such a driving storm?" and then he says, blushing red as fire. "O, I forgot, you told me your errand; and a sad one it is, too! So poor Brother Peter is dying?"

"No, Peter was never so truly alive," says Samuel. "It is Sister Whiteflock who is dying — or who thinks she is — and pray my good friend, make haste."

"You are quite right," says Mr. Lightwait, smiling graciously; and then he says, apologetically, that he believes he is scarcely awake. "You must know, Samuel," he explains, "that you roused me out of the deepest sleep possible. Wearied out with study I threw myself on the sofa there, and had fallen into the completest oblivion when your halloo startled me; and in truth I believe I have scarcely gotten my senses together yet. Were you ever wakened so?"

And then he tells Samuel again, seeing his look of impatience, perhaps, that he will not detain him now—not a minute longer.

"I must put myself in more suitable trim, you understand," and he indicated his dressing-gown and slippers, and then he comes back to the sofa, moves something from one arm of it, looks furtively about, and then at last he does get out of the room.

Samuel groaned aloud when he was left alone—still standing, mute as a statue—then, being always ready to distrust himself rather than another, he began to doubt and to explain away the evidence of his senses. "Maybe he was talking in his sleep," he soliloquized, "and maybe I saw but one shadow, after all. O, wicked heart of mine to be so ready to admit evil thoughts." And sinking down upon the sofa he stretched out one arm in a pleading, helpless sort of way, and caught at the pillow. As he did so, something loosened itself from the fringes and fell to the ground. With the shyness that always came over him when he was among fine things, he feared he had done some mischief, and dropping his hand began to feel along the carpet.

"God 'a' mercy!" was the cry that came to his lip, as if it were half smothered in his heart; he was on his feet and holding what he had taken up full to the light. It was a little French slipper, trimmed with a rosette of scarlet velvet!

"God 'a' mercy!" says he again; and this time the exclamation was hardly distinguishable from a moan, so low, so despairing; he had turned the lining of white kid toward the light, and there in his own handwriting was the name he feared to see—"Margaret."

This was not that which had been caught in the fringe of the pillow, and so at first arrested his attention; he had had a glimpse of that as it fell, and it was not a lady's slipper.

"No matter," he said, coming back to the sofa and seating himself again, "I will not search into this bad business." But while this thought was taking shape in his mind, he set his foot upon something that snapped beneath the weight; it was a little comb of coral, another of his gifts to Margaret.

His first impulse was to take Mr. Lightwait by the collar when he should appear, accuse him of false dealing with little Margaret, and so turn him out of his own house, neck and heels, but the second thought was wiser and calmer. He tucked the slipper under his waistcoat, and when his pastor came at last, all muffled and cloaked, he went forth with him, never speaking one word.

"Hold!" says the bishop's son touching him on the arm, "you have forgotten your lantern and all your wrappers!"

"No matter," says Samuel, shaking off the hand as though it had been a viper, "the outward storm is nothing!"

A sudden gust of wind at this moment carried away his hat. He did not heed it, but, with the rain beating on his head and the winds flying in his face, strode straight along, and for some reason the bishop's son preferred not to address him again.

"I have fetched the man you wished to see, Sister Whiteflock," says Samuel, bending down to her pillow; and then he went out of the chamber, and left them alone.

The remainder of the night he passed in the room where the corpse lay, and long before morning it was given him to understand as plainly as though it had been whispered in his ear, that the course of action he had so hurriedly outlined was the right one and the only one to pursue. But the time for action was not quite come; he kept all these things, therefore, and pondered them in his heart.

Margaret came with her mother to Peter's funeral, and Samuel noted that she wept from first to last with a bitterness which a grief not personal to herself could hardly have been expected to inspire. He could not help thinking, indeed, that she was but giving expression to some pent up trouble — a trouble which had already pinched her cheek, stolen the redness from her mouth, and all the light and sparkle from her eyes, so that she seemed to have had a dozen sorrowful years added to her life since he last saw her.

He would gladly have spoken some word of comfort to

her, but he perceived that she avoided him, and he thought on the whole it was perhaps wisest to respect her preference.

Mr. Charles Gayfeather made himself very busy at the funeral, having installed himself in a sort of semi-official position between the chief mourners and the undertaker; directing, arranging and supervising all minor matters, and adding not a little to the parade and ceremonial of the occasion. When they turned away from the grave he took it upon himself to put Mrs. Whiteflock, who had previously been attended by Samuel, into the carriage with the bishop's son, and to place himself beside his nephew. "I have something to tell you, dear boy," he whispered, "and I may not have another opportunity."

"Verily," said he, when they were seated, "man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble," and having thus delivered himself of an appropriate reflection, he fell talking about his personal plans and prospects with a subdued and sober grace that sat by no means ill upon him.

"I think I have it in my power to do you a favor, Sam," he said, "and that without putting myself to any inconvenience. I am to be sent on business connected with our house to the very neighborhood where lie our Uncle John Catwild's estates. I can settle up the whole affair, you see, if you will but empower me legally to do so, and have it done with, and the sooner such affairs are settled the better, always." Then he said he had fancied that Samuel might not wish to leave his friends just then in their affliction, and that he should probably go and return before Samuel would be ready to set out. "And then, to speak plain, Sam, my dear boy, I understand more about business than you do! And there will be a vast deal of unpleasant detail to be gotten over, even though the will is so explicit."

What further he said need not be recapitulated. Suffice to say that before they reached Mrs. Whiteflock's gate he had gotten Samuel's consent to his proposal, and had fixed the day for the clinching of the legal nail.

"By the by, Sam," he said, as he was taking leave, "shall you be wanting that thousand before I get back?"

"No," Samuel would "not need the money; don't give yourself any trouble about it, Uncle Charley," he said, "but keep it till next month, or next year, if it suits your convenience."

"You are too good! too generous! my dear boy; but you shall have it back this minute, if you think there is any probability of your needing it before I return. I would rather pinch myself than you."

But Samuel protested that he would not have the money back just then; he need not have protested; there was no likelihood of his getting it just then.

Two or three days subsequent to the funeral, Mrs. Fairfax Allprice came to see Mrs. Whiteflock, ostensibly to condole with her, but what she talked of chiefly was the strange malady of her daughter Margaret.

"I don't know what to make of the child," she says; "sometimes I fear she is losing her mind; she is drooping and moping from morning till night, and I may say from night till morning, for I can hear her walking her chamber floor, and moaning and fretting to herself hour after hour, sometimes till broad daylight.

"She says she is not sick, and all the Doctor can do he cannot persuade her to take one grain of medicine, but she doesn't eat enough to keep a linnet alive, and it seems to me she must die or else lose her wits, if some change for the better does not come to her soon. What can have come over her spirit? You would hardly know her; she is just like the ghost of herself.

"Do come, dear Sister Whiteflock, and see what you can make of it all!" And then she tells Mrs. Whiteflock almost under her breath that the engagement with the bishop's son seems to be broken off, as far as she can judge, but that she really knows nothing. "Margaret will not tell me one word," she says, "but when I entreat her never so kindly, she only cries and frets the more. O, dear sister, I know how to pity you now! Come soon, for I am at my wit's ends."

The following day Mrs. Whiteflock went to see what she could make of it all, and came back with a face as sad as death. "O, Samuel, Samuel," she cries, "what shall we do for our poor little Margaret? She is near losing her wits, sure enough. It would make you weep to see her—her eyes on the ground; her hands in her lap, and her mouth as white as marble, only when now and then a little moan comes over it, as though it were the blood bubbling from her very heart?"

At last she gets a letter out of her bosom, "There, Sam-

uel," she says, "is a letter which the bishop's son has sent to Margaret, and she is breaking her heart about it." And then, drawing very near to Samuel, leaning quite upon his shoulder, in fact, she tells him, almost in a whisper, that she is afraid the letter is not all she is breaking her heart about, neither!

"O, Samuel, Samuel! what shall we do?"

She put the letter in his hand and left him alone. When she came back, which she did directly, she found the letter lying on the ground and Samuel staring into the blank air.

"I need not ask you what you think?" she says.

"No you need not ask."

Then he covered his face with his hands, and they sat a long time in silence.

"What shall we do?" says Mrs. Whiteflock, at last; "go to the bishop's son with the letter and with everything?"

"No, not to him; I don't know how to deal with such a man; I will go to Father Goodman; he is wise."

"When? to-morrow?"

"And why not to-day, at once? I have no preparations to make."

Then it was agreed between them that he should start off immediately, riding old Sorrel, the best traveller in Mrs. Whiteflock's stables, and encumbered with no luggage, except it were a pair of saddlebags to contain a change of linen and some other necessaries. And in all the confidence that was of necessity between them, Samuel did not breathe a word of what he had seen at the parsonage, nor did he intimate the fact of his having resolved then and there to go and see Father Goodman. But this was what he had resolved to do when he put the slipper under his waistcoat, and the seal upon his lips.

The house was made quite cheery again with the bustle of preparation, for Mrs. Whiteflock found twenty things to do where she had thought there was but one. Old Sorrel, too, must have shoes set for rough roads and log bridges; a pack saddle must be made upon which to strap overcoat, umbrella and other equipage; the old girth must be mended, and a new extra strong one provided. Other hindrances fell out; when all was about ready, a strange man appeared at the door and inquired for Mr. Samuel Dale; and when Samuel appeared, he handed him a letter, sealed with wax

and elegantly superscribed. It was from Mr. Gayfeather, and Samuel's brow clouded as he read; it was, of course, a request for money.

"I am off a little sooner than I expected, dear Sam," he said, "and cannot well spare the money to pay the note that will be handed you with this; please arrange it for me and add one more to my many obligations. I will be back at farthest in six weeks, and then we will square up, once for all, I hope. Everything looks bright for me as a May morning. By the way, Kate is charmed with you; she comes near making me jealous! Always and always your affectionate
UNCLE CHARLEY."

The note that was presented when the letter had been read, called for more money than Samuel had at command; he was obliged to borrow part of it, and this left him penniless. He could not of course set out on his journey utterly destitute, so that in one way and another his departure was delayed beyond his expectations by three or four days. And even then he started in some haste, and without being quite ready. It was the evening before the time fixed for his setting out, and he sat watching Mrs. Whiteflock, who was knitting the second of a pair of woollen mittens for him. "It will be frosty of mornings," she says, "before you get back." When one of the children came running in with word that Mr. Stake wished to see Samuel one minute.

"I'm afeard everything isn't right, Mr. Dale," he began; "there's things a-being said about Margaret, that ortn't to be said unless it's knowed certain that she's fell from virtue, and I must say there is some grounds for the gossip." But we need not stop to repeat all Mr. Stake said, the gist of it was this: "I sot out airly, day afore yesterday morning, think it was, to look about a little in order to scare up some creatures; it wasn't daylight yet when I got off, and it just begin be graylight like, when I got along to the 'Dug Hill,' a mighty lonesome place, you know, any time, but specially in that oncertain light. Well, I sees a little thing creepin' along to the side o' the road, as though it didn't want to be seen, and that was what made me look at it so sharp, I think, and yet I a'most thought at first it was a bit of shadder, or mist, but direc'ly I see it wasn't; in fact, I see it was a

woman, and the more she shied off the more I drove slow and watched her, for I begin to think maybe it was a thief. She had a veil close over her face and a bundle o' things tied up in a handkercher in her hand; and she kind a drooped along, drooped along, and then thinks says I, she's a sick woman, maybe, and I drawed rein, and says I, speakin' respectful, 'Good day, ma'am!' And then says I, 'If you've fur to go, I'll give you a lift in my cart, if you've a mind.' But she just shook her head and shied off, never speakin' at all. And then says I, 'Are you sick, my good woman?' right out so, says I. And with that she leaned agin an old lime kiln that was by the roadside, and burst right out a-cryin'. I knowed the voice then, and if you believe me, Mr. Dale, it was Margaret! I got right out of the cart when I see who it was, and says I, 'My poor child, have you been sot adrift, this way?' for I thought maybe the Doctor and her didn't get along, and he'd turned her out. But she said, 'No, she wasn't turned out;' but all I could say and do, I couldn't find out where she was a-goin', nor what for. And says I, 'I'll give you a little lift anyhow, for I thought maybe the rattlin' of the cart-wheels and the smell of the tar, for the hubs had fresh tar onto 'em, would get up her sperits, and I just took her in my arms and lifted her in, the same as though she had been a two years child. But the tar didn't fetch her up, nor the rattle o' the wheels, nor nothin' I could say; she just throwed herself down in the straw, and never looked up nor spoke from first to last, and I kep' on and on, for I sort a thought she was a-goin' to town, and when I reached the corporation line I stopt, and says I, 'Which way now, my good little girl?' 'Good!' says she; 'that word isn't for me.' And with that she got out, and the last I see of her she was a-creepin' along, creepin' along by the side o' the canal, her head fairly on her bosom and the bundle in her hand."

"And this you think was two days ago?" says Samuel.

"Yes, I'm sure it was day afore yesterday, Mr. Dale; I meant to have told you afore, you or Miss Whiteflock, but it appears like a body always has affairs o' their own to keep 'em busy; I hope there is nothin' wrong, anyhow, it would be so dreadful for the bishop's son!"

"I hope there is nothing wrong," says Samuel; and he went straight to the stables and saddled old Sorrel, muttering, as he tightened the girth, "Dreadful for the bishop's son, to be sure! God 'a' mercy!"

The sun had been set half an hour; the silver ring of the new moon hung low in the east, and the stars were beginning to twinkle here and there along the sky, as he mounted and rode away through the solemn, dusky light. Amongst the rest, (and be sure the Bible and hymn-book were not wanting,) he had in his saddle-bags the little French slipper and the letter which Mr. Lightwait had written to Margaret, about which Mrs. Whiteflock had said she was breaking her heart. All night Samuel rode, and with brief haltings for the sake of his horse rather than of himself, all day again, and late on into the night. And on the afternoon of the second day old Sorrel began to flag a little, stout as he was, for the roads were rough, and he had urged him beyond what he would have done in ordinary circumstances. He had been travelling for two hours through low, swampy ground, covered with almost uninterrupted forest, beech, white oak, low scrubby dog-wood, and the tall, straight gum, with just here and there some settler's log cabin in a little patch of clearing by the roadside, when all at once, upon a slight elevation, and with its narrow margin of clearing all shut in by thick woods, he came upon a log meeting-house. The doors were open and the people were gathered for worship, or service of some sort. There was no fence or inclosure of any kind about the house, but where the trees had been cut away, thistles, briars and a variety of low bushes overran the ground, and among these, showing dark and frightful, there was a great heap of fresh earth, indicating a newly-dug grave.

Round about stood rude carts and wagons, with board seats across, and a chair or two for the old people, and here and there, tied to the low shrubs, or to the drooping branches of trees were the work-horses, gay wild colts, and sober old mares, that had been put under the saddle for the occasion. Some of the riders had come bareback, apparently, as a number of the horses had only a bit of blanket or coverlet strapped on their backs, and that a good many of the old mares had brought women, was evidenced by their side-saddles.

There were funeral services going forward, past doubt. Samuel dismounted, secured old Sorrel so that he might graze a little off the thistly grass, brushed the dust from his hat and waistcoat, and went into the house.

A solemn scene presented itself; the house, built of hewn logs, was unfinished; bare rafters overhead, and open "chinks" in the wall, and the pulpit nothing more than a platform of rough planks loosely laid down, and elevated a little above the rude benches that served for pews. Only the benches round about the pulpit were occupied, so there were vacant seats enough and to spare. On one of these Samuel seated himself, drawing a good many eyes upon him as he did so; a stranger in the place naturally exciting wonder and curiosity, especially among the young people, many of whom were women. But if they wondered, he wondered in turn; where did all these men and women come from, and how did they live in the little huts, and off the black, swampy land? There were old gray-headed men and women, who had emigrated to this wild country for the sake of leaving more land to their boys and girls, perhaps, and it was touching to see their tremulous hands grasping the thorny sticks that helped them to walk, as they leaned so earnestly forward, lest they might lose one word of the preacher's utterance. The faces of some of the women were almost as white as the borders of their caps, and the sharp shoulders showing through their thin cotton shawls, and the blue lips and finger nails told unmistakably of the ague that had shaken the color, and almost the very bones out of them.

The dresses of all, men and women, old and young, were of the homeliest homespun and such poor attempts at finery as some of the gayer girls had made, served only to add the fantastic to the rude.

Such a congregation in such a place would have been solemn enough at any time, but the solemnity was deepened to awfulness now by the coffin that rested on a roughly constructed trestle, directly against the pulpit; the coffin being of stained wood and nailed together almost as roughly as the trestle. It was that of an adult person, and being all unrelieved as it was by covering of any kind, even of flowers, increased the dreadfulness that is dreadful enough at best.

A shelf, formed of an oak slab, and supported on long legs, held the Bible, the hymn-book and a tin cup of water, for the accommodation of the preacher, who stood immediately behind the shelf. This man was quite in harmony with his surroundings. He was tall, but without the slightest

stoop ; with deep sunk iron-gray eyes, and thick, bushy hair to match, weather-beaten to bronze, and standing on his legs as an oak stands in the ground, firm, fearless, full of vigor.

His wide white neck-cloth, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, and his "shad-belly" coat were all that betokened his clerical profession, and but for these you would not have been surprised to see him sweating at the anvil, splitting rails, or holding the plough. But when he spoke you had neither eyes nor ears for any one else, he so enchained, fascinated and thrilled you with his wonderful power. Now he swept you along with his low-toned pleadings as the wind sweeps the willows, and now he launched some terrible denunciation like a thunderbolt, and you shrank back involuntarily as though your heart were being crushed and crashed all to pieces. His very soul stood in his eyes, or threatening or yearning, and when his brawny arm reached toward you, you felt that it was to clutch you from the fires of the pit. In short he was one of those inspired men whose whole lives have been a cry in the wilderness—one of those who come for a witness to bear witness of the light. When the closing hymn had been sung—

"Hark, from the tombs a doleful sound,"

the preacher leading and all the congregation joining, and the mourners gathered (and all were mourners) to look for the last time upon the face of their dead, Samuel went forward among the rest.

"You have been wise, my son, to turn aside and tarry with us for an hour," said the preacher, taking his hand, "and I hope you have felt that it is good to be here."

We will not linger over the solemn ceremonies; let it suffice to say that when the dust had been consigned to dust, and the fresh mound of earth heaped up among the briers, the good people, as they were about to turn their faces homeward, gathered about Samuel, to make kind inquiries, and to press upon him their simple hospitality. When he mentioned whither he was going and whence he had come and that his main object was to see Father Goodman, there was a general exclamation of glad surprise, "Why, this is Father Goodman that you have seen already!"

Samuel's heart sank down—would he ever dare show the

letter of the bishop's son, or the little French slipper to this austere man? But the austerity vanished as they rode together, for they were yet ten miles from the Big Bend, though, as Samuel was glad to find, part of this distance was toward home again, he having been misdirected and sent quite by chance in the way of the log meeting-house in the wilderness.

"Not by chance," says Father Goodman, "chance is nothing; by Providence, you mean."

The rivulets and creeks were swollen by the recent rains, and all out of their banks went tearing, black and turbid, carrying drift of rails, and mill-dams, and bridges, and sometimes whole saplings washed out by the roots, and with all their green branches bruised and broken together. But Father Goodman was never disconcerted, and never halted for a single instant, but when he could see the path no longer he would drop the rope bridle-rein on the neck of his faithful beast, and let her ford, if she might ford, and if not, swim to the opposite bank. The roads were miry in some places, in others bridged with logs, and then again there were miles of dull, stagnant water to be plashed through. But never a word of complaint from Father Goodman; he was as calm and content as though it had been all a summer meadow through which he was riding. Sometimes he would sing hymns, making all the wilderness ring again, and sometimes he would read chapter upon chapter from the Bible, as though the text were lying open before him, and again his sun-brown hand would caress the rusty mane of his tired mare, as softly and kindly as though the rusty mane had been golden hair.

When they came upon a wood-cutter's hut, or a settler's cabin, he was sure to ride up to the door in order to give the inmates God speed, and the mothers would lift up the youngest boy that he might shake hands, and bring the baby from the cradle that he might look upon it; and if there were a flower by the door-side it was broken off and stuck in his button-hole. Toward sunset they came upon wider clearings and better settlements, and where the land begun to be broken, and the streams less raging and wild, and at last, as the sun was sinking from sight, they beheld the parting rays glittering upon a church spire away in the distance, and directly they saw the straggling streets and

shining window panes of a village. That was the village of Big Bend. At the door of a small, rude house in the outskirts of the town they stopped and got down from their tired beasts. A sweet-faced woman met and welcomed them, and directly prepared the supper and served them with her own hands. She was the daughter of Father Goodman, and her lovely face was but the index of a lovely character—a widow, and a woman of good repute in all the churches.

She kept his house, and had always a bright hearth for him, and a cheerful smile, when he came back from riding the long, hard circuit. They had a bit of garden ground and this small house in which they lived, rent free; they owned a cow and some poultry, and Father Goodman received a salary of two hundred dollars, and upon this they supported themselves, and had something left for charity.

The circuit he rode carried him forty miles from home, and if there chanced to be sick, or poor, or burial in his way, he gave his service and his heart with it. Besides circuit duties he preached at the Big Bend three times of a Sunday, superintended the Sunday school, visited the sick and the sad, and for his recreation mended his shoes, or dugged in the garden at home. He did not spare his hands, nor his head, nor his heart, but spent himself and his substance for the benefit of others, continually. In short, they led the lives of two saints, he and his tender-eyed daughter, he imparting Christian faith and hope and courage, she with her sweet words and ways—her gentle nursing of the sick, and the helpfulness of her quiet sympathies.

The evening was passed in cheerful, happy conversation, and it was in the course of the talk, as they sat before the blazing logs, that Samuel learned what the reader has already been told about their means and manner of life.

When the unframed skeleton of a clock counted nine from the dim corner where it stood, the young woman stuck her knitting-needles through the ball of gray wool yarn off which she was knitting, and fetching the great Bible laid it open upon the good man's knees, and it was not until after the accustomed devotions were ended that Samuel intimated the errand upon which he had come. Then the young woman took her candle and went away to bed, and Father Goodman and his guest remained till the embers burned low

and the rusty weights of the old clock dragged down and down, almost to the ground, engaged in the saddest confidences.

"O, my Margaret! my little pet Margaret! my baby, that I have held on my knee a hundred times!" cried Father Goodman, as he held the letter of the bishop's son shaking in his hands.

What he read was to this effect — that Margaret was not to be so importunate, nor to come to him so often as hitherto, she would only excite suspicion and remark, — for what had already been he was deeply repentant, but love, even supposing love to have existed, — in its truest and best sense he would not say it ever had, — meant a great many other things than *marriage*, he could tell her, though she seemed never to have suspected it. He was mortal and, with other men, liable to temptation, but Margaret must be aware that she herself had failed to exercise that severe discretion wise judgment always dictated. She had taken his love for granted, he saw, and was sorry to see; she had been misled in part, he doubted not, by the diamond ring, he having omitted to tell her — and he confessed himself to blame for the omission — that the ring was Samuel's gift, and he but the conveyer of it. And here he more than hinted that it was not even yet too late to win back her old sweetheart, who was in fact much worthier of her gentle, confiding heart than himself. He had certainly never intended marriage, and he begged that her foolish and childish importunity should be deferred at least for the present; she must keep her mind cheerful with visits and patch-work, and not spoil her pretty eyes with tears — it was quite unworthy of her generous nature to behave as she was doing, but if she was determined to make everything but marriage impossible, he supposed he must submit with such grace as he might. But not yet. "Do for heaven's sake, Margaret, bring to your aid a little patience and common sense! Meantime, rely upon my friendship, and if you desire me to see Samuel for you, I will do so with the greatest pleasure, and doubt not but that I could forecast a happier future for you and him than you by any possibility could hope to enjoy with me!"

"But how am I to go?" says Father Goodman; "how am I to leave all my expectant people here? unless indeed, you, Samuel, should take my place while I am away?"

"I might take it," answered Samuel, "but to fill it — that I could never hope to do — and then I am so unworthy."

Father Goodman smiled at this, and repeated the parable of the young man who hid his talent, and how his lord answered and said, "Thou wicked and slothful servant." And in the end it was agreed that Samuel should remain, preaching and exhorting with such power as the spirit should bestow, while Father Goodman was away.

There was not much time for sleep, for at daybreak the house was astir again, and after thanksgiving, and the reading of that chapter from Job beginning, "Even to-day is my complaint bitter; my stroke is heavier than my groaning," they broke fast frugally and simply, the patient, plodding mare was led to the door, the saddle girted on, the pack-saddle adjusted, the overcoat rolled up with the umbrella inside and the red lining out, all firmly secured, and Father Goodman, with green baize spatterdashes tied about his legs, mounted and rode away, and in the old weather-beaten saddle-bags that were slung across the saddle was the little French slipper and that cruel letter of the bishop's son.

Sometimes he would stop where there was a clear running brook, or a bit of fresh grass, and with the old saddle-bags for a pillow, stretch himself on the ground and rest for an hour, and then having drank from his double hand, perhaps, remount and pursue his journey as cheerfully and as much refreshed as though he had slept in a king's bed.

It was upon the afternoon of the third day of his journey that he began to get glimpses of the hill-tops that hem in the beautiful Ohio; his mare, sturdy yet, but not so young as she once was, was tired, and with the rope rein loose on her neck was picking her way along the grassy roadside, and nibbling a mouthful now and then as some fresh bunch of herbage attracted her, when Father Goodman perceived a light spring wagon, drawn by two smart young horses, coming briskly down the hill before him. He was a lover of horses, and this beautiful pair of grays attracted him; he had seen them before, he thought, and sure enough, as they came up the hill he found that he knew them very well, and their owner, who sat behind them, driving with so steady a hand. It was Elder Baker of his own church, and on second thought he remembered that his friend and neigh-

bor had been from home a fortnight, visiting a daughter who resided in the city of Cincinnati. He was just returning now ; but what little object was this, seated beside him on the board that crossed the front of the wagon, looking so worn, so dejected, and almost drooping upon the old man's shoulder.

"Why, Father Goodman!" "Brother Baker!" were the exclamations of surprise and pleasure with which they greeted one another. Father Goodman had ridden his old mare close to the wagon-side in order to shake hands with his neighbor, and all at once he felt the little white fingers of the drooping creature he had before noticed, clutching nervously at his arm—and now she had thrown back her veil and was kissing his hand and weeping over it. Farther Goodman was weeping too, and trembling nearly as much as she. It was Margaret.

"O, my darling! my pet! my baby!" he cries, and then leaning one elbow on the shoulder of his mare, reaches down to her and kisses her cheek.

Margaret wept all the more bitterly at this. "O, my good father," she says, all her heart sobbing in her words, "you would not kiss me if you knew!"

"I do know, my poor child!" he says, patting her head softly with his great brawny hand; "I do know it all, and that is why I am here; just to see you my baby; just to help you, if I can. Thank God I have found you, for I feared, from the news that came to me, that you had strayed where I might never find you in this world."

Then Margaret told him about falling sick in the streets of the city months past, and about being left by her mother for an hour or two in a basement grocery store on the corner of Baker's Alley and Western Row; how the kind woman who was Elder Baker's daughter tended her, and how she told her, among other things, that her own father lived in the town with Father Goodman, and that he was coming to visit her early in October.

"When it got very dark about me," said Margaret, "something seemed to tell me to go to you, so I found out this good woman in the town, and waited till Elder Baker was ready to go home, which did not happen till to-day; and here I am, such as I am!"

And hiding her eyes on the old man's shoulder, she sat

helplessly fluttering like a leaf that is the sport of some furious wind.

Elder Baker now proposed to drive back to the city, and leave Margaret for that night with his daughter where he had found her, but Father Goodman said, "No; my mare will carry double; I will take the child right in my arms; I know all the country hereabout, and by riding one of the cross-roads, we shall reach home almost as soon as we should reach the city."

So they took farewell, and with a cheerful God speed, rode their separate ways. Father Goodman and Margaret talked of Peter and his happy death, of Mrs. Whiteflock and her runaway children, of everybody except the bishop's son, as they rode slowly toward the sunset, Margaret nestling close to the great, good heart that was come to befriend her.

It was dusk when they came into the town, and not many people were astir in the streets. Still, whoever saw Father Goodman, recognized him, and Margaret, about whom, since she had been missing, there had been the wildest excitement, was recognized too, and the news ran like wildfire over the village. Without halting, without turning to the right or left, they rode through the main street, past the butcher's little house, past Miss Goke's broad window, where one tallow candle was throwing its feeble light upon bonnets and ribbons, on, straight on, till they came to the gate of the parsonage. It was wide open, and the stable-yard was full of bustle—carriages and saddle-horses, and extra servants; the bishop's son was entertaining visitors, and as he sat at the head of his supper-table, the wine-glass literally fell out of his hand, crashing to pieces, and so drawing all eyes upon him. He had seen, riding past his windows, and up to his very door, Father Goodman with Margaret on his saddle-bow!

As soon as he could command himself he made excuses to his guests. "Here is a reverend father," he said, "whom you all will be glad to honor. Pray allow me with my own hand to fetch him to you and present him!" And when he had welcomed Father Goodman, he said: "Margaret, doubtless, is too weary to join us, and shall be served in her own room." And drawing her aside, he conducted her into the house by another way.

She did not lift her eyes to him; in truth, he almost carried her, a white little bundle, limp in his arm as a rag, but he felt, as he held her thus, for the eyes of Father Goodman were upon him, that he was bearing the burden of all his life.

Before another sunset they were married, Father Goodman officiating, and Dr. and Mrs. Allprice, Mrs. Whiteflock and Miss Goke attending as witnesses.

"It will be my turn next!" whispered Miss Goke to Mrs. Dr. Allprice, as she was about taking leave; "but how dreadful plain your bonnet is! not a speck of lace, nor a flower! It's all the Doctor's work, I know!"

"By no means, my dear!" says the denuded lady quickly; "I never can dress gayly enough to please Prosper, but somehow my tastes have changed since I was married!"

She winced visibly, as she said this, and her eyes fastened the while upon Miss Goke's furbelows, as the eyes of one who is starving, fasten upon bread.

When Father Goodman rode homeward, he carried in his saddle-bags the second of the pair of woollen mittens which Samuel had left unfinished when he went away, and in his heart he carried a hundred kind messages, among them, one for Samuel to keep and ride old Sorrel, as long as he lived, for it was predicted, and rightly, that he would soon be licensed to preach, and remain in the wild new country where he was, for good and all.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE QUARTERLY CONFERENCE.



It happened, somewhere about ten years after the bishop's son had taken up his burden, that he, and most of the other persons who have appeared in this story, met at a Quarterly Conference, in one of the districts of Southern Ohio.

And here it may be stated, that Samuel Dale had meantime become Bishop Dale, and that his praise was in all the churches. About many a winter fire-side, the story of his early poverty and hardship was repeated, together with anecdotes of his later life, to which the mothers listened, tearful-eyed, thinking that what Samuel Dale had achieved, might yet be achieved by other lads — perhaps by one of their own boys — who should say!

But of the Conference. There was Brother John Lightwait, as he was called now-a-days, an older and a sadder man than we knew him, but having his wayward moods yet, if we may judge by the side remarks, evincing uneasy concern and care about him, that were passed from time to time among the older of the brethren — as, for instance — “What do you hear of Brother Lightwait?” “Does he give satisfaction to his charge?” “A man of ability, but!”

It may also be stated, as indicative of a lack of perfect trust and confidence, that he was, somehow, without any concerted plans of action, to be sure, but still, somehow, kept in the back-ground.

His beautiful locks were thin and faded, but still dropt about his eyes now and then, faintly intimating the old grace; and his broadcloth had more shine about the elbows and knees than it used to have, and everywhere, hanging like a dead weight upon his arm, was Margaret, listless and limp as a rag. Her cheeks had lost their roses, and her

eyes all their merry sparkle — she had two children hanging on her skirts — robust, rollicking, importunate and unmanageable; and, in common with her children, she addressed her husband as *father*. When she talked, it was chiefly of the baby left at home in the cradle, or of that other girl, buried now these five years. You would hardly have recognized the bishop's son and Margaret; for the same persons they were ten years ago; not so much for the youth of life that was gone, as for the youth of heart that was gone. Only once did something of the old brightness come back to the cheeks of both, and that was when the name of Bishop Dale was mentioned.

In the old-fashioned parlor of one of the elders, when the evening's services were concluded, our special acquaintances, together with a good many strangers, were assembled for a little chat and social relaxation.

There was Mr. Hoops, all shaven and shorn, and otherwise fresh as a bridegroom — the snowy whiteness of his linen, and the neat little patch at his elbow, attesting the careful hand of the wife at home — at home, as she always was.

"No, she didn't come," says Mr. Hoops, to one who enquired for her — "She wanted to, bad enough, but the fact is, orders was a comin' in for bonnets, and caps, and things, and we couldn't both leave very well."

Then the sister to whom this was said repeated it to another, and the two women shook their heads mournfully, sighing, "poor Miss Goke!" for the milliner had always been called Miss Goke, in spite of the Mrs. P. G. Hoops, on the sign.

There was Mrs. Allprice, foolish, affected, slovenly and pious, talking a great deal about her lovely daughter Margaret, and her excellent son John Hamlyn, and boasting of the unexampled felicity of their married life.

Nothing, indeed, could exceed the devotion of John to Margaret, unless it were that of the Doctor for herself — and really she was almost ashamed of the fondness of her husband sometimes. She had lectured him so that he did behave a little better before folks!

"He couldn't come to the meeting without me," she says, "for he can't bear me out of his sight for a moment — dear Prosper!" Then she ran across the room to him, and

twitching his sleeve, for he was talking with a younger and handsomer woman, told him in a whisper that she did wish for mercy's sake he would remember once in a while, that he had a wife still living in the world.

"I am not in danger of forgetting it," says the Doctor, and then he renewed his conversation with the handsome young woman, with as lively an interest as ever. He seemed, in truth, to have borne the wear and tear of the marital teasing pretty bravely — his hair had fallen off to a thin friz, it must be owned, and the little tuft of beard under his double chin was the color of linen, when it is a little over-blued; but his cheeks stood out with fatness, and his body had gained in rotundity — gained so much indeed, that his legs seemed to have lost in a corresponding degree. So that when he waddled about, he looked a good deal as a fish might look, if it were attempting to walk on its tail. He was still professional as ever in his manner and conversation, and had come to the conference amply provided with calomel for gratuitous distribution, so that every sickly brother with whom he came in contact, parted from him with a shining tin box of blue pills in his hand.

Mrs. Whiteflock was the centre of an admiring circle still, but how much less conspicuous and aggressive than she used to be. She wore a cap over her smooth hair, growing gray now, and in the place of the old finery, decent and sober mourning. She was a little stouter than she used to be, and her brow was not quite so smooth, but her face had gained in sweetness of expression, more than it had lost by time. When she went and came, she was attended by a tall, large-eyed, and pale-cheeked young man, whose unobtrusive and gentle manners won the good will of all he met, and that was Peter, home from college for the vacation.

All at once the murmur and stir pervading the different groups into which the assembly had broken itself, subsided. One of the circuit riders from the west, was talking of Samuel Dale, our young bishop, he called him. "He ought to have had a fortune by rights," he was saying; "and to have been as rich in worldly things as he is in spiritual, but I suppose you all know how that worthless relative of his — one Mr. Gayfeather, cheated him out of his lawful inheritance; contriving by one pretence and

another, to get the legacy into his own hands, and to keep it there.

"The Bishop never speaks of it," said the stranger, "unless he is forced to, and then he makes as if his loss had been all a gain. 'I have been saved from vexation and care,' he will say; 'perhaps from temptation.'" It was at this point that the brightness came into the cheeks of John and Margaret Lightwait.

After this, a good many incidents and anecdotes were told of the young Bishop; of the hardships he had undergone in his early career as a circuit rider in the west; of the good turns he had done to strangers whom he had met by chance in the wilderness, and of the wonderful power and efficacy of his preaching.

In one place, twenty sinners who had come to scoff, it was said, had fallen down, smitten by the first tones of his voice, and had lain before him as dead men, for hours, rising at last to confess their wickedness, and to pray to be prayed for. And in another place, it was told how that an old and hardened man, who had begun to cry out against him with all profanity, and oaths, had been suddenly bereft of speech, and that when utterance was restored, he had finished the sentence begun in wrath and denunciation, with shouting praises and glory to God.

One person had seen him, where he had encamped for the night in the thick woods, far from human habitation, spelling his way through his Greek Testament, with all the eager enthusiasm of a school-boy — "for he is not among those," said the narrator; "who believe that ignorance is wiser than knowledge."

"He stayed with me once nearly a week," said an old settler, whose hands were nearly as brown as his coat, "and I never knew it was him till long after he was gone. It was a stormy time in November; the creeks and rivers up uncommonly, and the roads a'most impassable; well, he rode up one night, all frozen over with sleet-like armor, for the wind had suddenly shifted, and the rain had turned to snow, and asked my wife — for I was in the barn at the time — if she could accommodate a traveller all night, or maybe till the river got fordable, for it was raging and roaring, and tearing up and crushing down trees as it went, till you could hear the noise of it for miles and miles. No

matter about a bed, he said, he could sleep on the floor before the fire, and be very comfortable.

"Well, he stayed nigh a week, I reckon, before the river fell, and all the time he entertained us, instead of us him. Mornings and evenings he would go out with me and feed the cattle, and many a time I've seen him put his arm around their necks, and look into their great eyes, a'most as if they was fellar creturs — he has got such a kind heart, it appears like it takes in everything. When the fire went down, he would mend it, and then he would sit with a child on either knee, and tell them stories of the wild beasts that had crossed his path, as he was riding alone through the wilderness, or of the prairie fire that had run after him, licking the air with its red tongues, and trampling the dry grass with its flaming feet. But oftenest he would read to the old wife, as she spun, about the green fields and shining flowers on beyond the river that we all dread so much. Sometimes he would sing hymn after hymn, of nights, when all was still, making the woods tremble with echoes; for there was a power in his voice to wake a spirit in dead things, — so the week went like a day, my wife said, and the children cried when he put his hand on their heads at parting — but, bless you, what was our surprise to learn, as we did long afterwards, that we had entertained our Bishop."

"That is just like Samuel!" cries Mrs. Whiteflock, "I knew nothing could spoil him!"

"Nothing," said Father Goodman, now a reverend old man, "unless his pretty wife shall do what all the rest has failed to do."

"Wife!" cried six or eight women, all at once. "Bishop Dale isn't married?"

Then it came out that the reverend father had married the young Bishop on his way to that very conference.

And after all the exclamations of wonder and surprise, the old man was set upon to tell about her. How did she look? how old was she, and oh, of all things, was she really pretty!

"Pretty as a rose bud!" answered the old man, with all a young man's enthusiasm, "but I can't tell you what she wore, nor how old she is. I only know that when I took her hand, I felt suffused as with the sweetness of some

lovely flower, and that her smile warmed me like sunshine. Yes, one thing more I do remember now, her hair would not stay in her little Methodist bonnet of white satin, there was such a great golden cloud of it, but got out and tumbled about her neck and shoulders, and half hid her modest eyes."

"Perhaps the bright tresses blinded your eyes too, Father Goodman!" said one of the women with a little laugh at the wild extravagance of her suggestion.

"They might have done so, and have entangled my heart into the bargain," he replied, in no wise disconcerted, for upon occasion he could be gay as well as grave; "if I had had but fifty years less on my shoulders, and our handsome young Bishop out of the way!"

There was a general stir when Father Goodman said this. He saw it and interpreting it, perhaps, in an adverse sense, at once stood up, and coming out in sight of all, said; "I am not mad, O, men and brethren, but speak the words of truth and soberness. I am an old gray-beard, to be sure, but my heart, thank God, is as young as the youngest of you all! And this youth of heart and soul, my friends, and I speak it not irreverently, is to my mind one of the strongest proofs of our immortality, this side of revelation. The flower grows brighter and brighter, and sweeter and sweeter, till it comes to full perfection; so does the fruit, and why not then, the soul of man; so large in its capacity, so infinite in its aspirations and its dreams, which are but the shadowy intimations of its possibilities, as I believe, and as I know, for faith is knowledge. Why not, I say, the soul of man, that shall not, it may be, come to full perfection till more of the ages of eternity shall have passed over it, than we are at present able even to conceive.

"Yes, my brethren and sisters, my heart is as much alive to beauty, and I am not ashamed to say it, as it was half a century ago. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, I hold it to be virtue and praise to think of these things, more especially when they appeal to our loyalty through the character and life of that great company of good women, who apart from the world's

recognition and the admiration of men's eyes, make only this noiseless appeal.

"Whatever the pride and vanity of man may almost, or quite persuade him to believe, woman is, after all, the central figure and the central power of this lower world. Our rougher hands hew and shape, or hew and seem to shape, but hers is the informing soul—the life and the spirit of the life.

"It is not the ground-work of dry dust, nor the blowing and beating of the wind that rounds the daisy's perfect face and makes it to send the very airs of heaven away from it sweeter than they came, not these so much, nor half so much, as the soft sunbeam, and the little drop of dew.

"I have been in the rudest homes, — I might almost say huts, of the prairies and the woods, and I have seen women that had never trodden any carpet but the carpet of the grass and the flowers of the grass, and who had never worn silken garments, nor dyed garments, nor any garments save from the looms at which they themselves had wrought, who yet ruled their houses and held their children with sovereign grace, and who had about them a finer royalty than any of your fading purples. I have been ministered to by hands that never felt a jewel, and that were adorned only by the signs of honest toil, and felt myself sumptuously entertained, for I was entertained with better things than dyed wool, or spun silk, or curiously carved metal. There are to-night, and all nights, feeding their lonely fires, spinning by their humble wheels, or tending their blessed cradles, women who make poverty riches, solitude society, the narrow enclosures of their cabin walls like the chambers of palaces, and who find in the serving of others the sweetest service to themselves.

"I thank God that I know these royal women, queens, and the daughters of queens, when I see them; ay, and I thank God that I love them too, with a love of which there is no need to be ashamed. I thank God that so many of them have chosen the good part that shall not be taken away from them, for our divine Lord and Master, about whose cross they lingered longest, and to whose tomb they came earliest, will not, of a surety, forget them in that great day when he numbers up his jewels. Amen."



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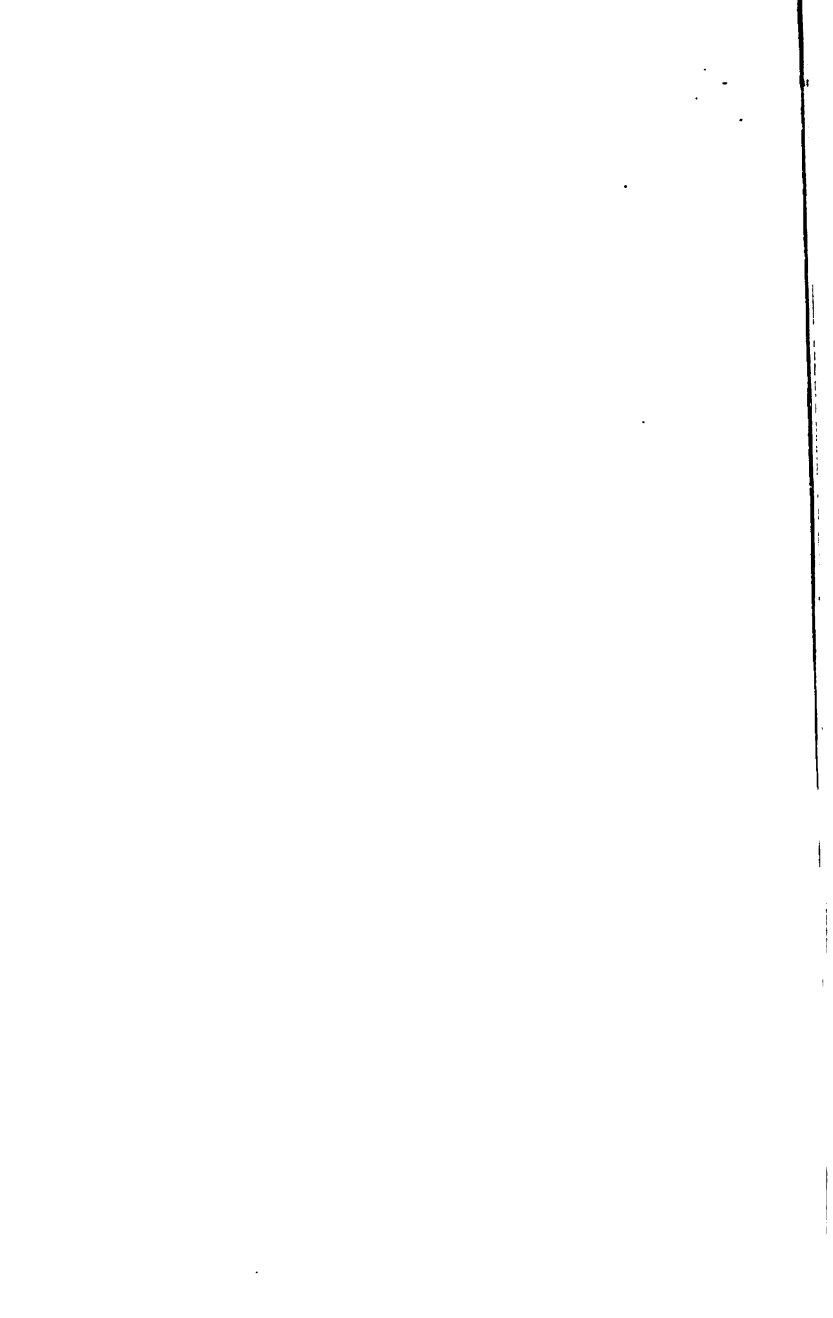
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